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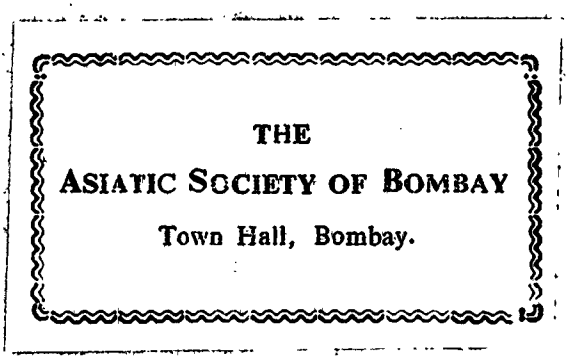

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THE

PLAIN SPEAKER:

OPINIONS

ON

BOOKS, MEN, AND THINGS.

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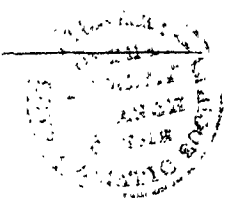
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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Motto to Essay on Prose-style of Poets—

"Do you read or sing? If you sing, you sing very ill!"

ESSAY I.

ON THE PROSE-STYLE OF POETS.

ESSAY I.

ON THE PROSE-STYLE OF POETS.

I HAVE but an indifferent opinion of the prose-style of poets: not that it is not sometimes good, nay, excellent; but it is never the better, and generally the worse from the habit of writing verse. Poets are winged animals, and can cleave the air, like birds, with ease to themselves and delight to the beholders; but like those "feathered, two-legged things," when they light upon the ground of prose and matter-of-fact, they seem not to have the same use of their feet.

What is a little extraordinary, there is a want of *rhythmus* and cadence in what they write without the help of metrical rules. Like persons who have been accustomed to sing to music, they are at a loss in the absence of the habitual accompaniment and guide to their judgment. Their style halts, totters, is loose, disjointed, and without expressive pauses or rapid movements. The measured cadence and regular *sing-song* of rhyme or blank verse have de-

stroyed, as it were, their natural ear for the mere characteristic harmony which ought to subsist between the sound and the sense. I should almost guess the Author of Waverley to be a writer of ambling verses from the desultory vacillation and want of firmness in the march of his style. There is neither *momentum* nor elasticity in it; I mean as to the *score*, or effect upon the ear. He has improved since in his other works: to be sure, he has had practice enough*. Poets either get into this incoherent, undetermined, shuffling style, made up of "unpleasing flats and sharps," of unaccountable starts and pauses, of doubtful odds and ends, flirted about like straws in a gust of wind; or, to avoid it and steady themselves, mount into a sustained and measured prose (like the translation of Ossian's Poems, or some parts of Shaftesbury's Characteristics) which is more odious still, and as bad as being at sea in a calm. Dr. Johnson's style (particularly in his Rambler,) is not free from the last objection. There is a tune *in it*, a mechanical recurrence of the same rise and fall in the clauses of his sentences, independent

* Is it not a collateral proof that Sir Walter Scott is the Author of Waverley, that ever since these Novels began to appear, his Muse has been silent, till the publication of Halidon-Hill?

of any reference to the meaning of the text, or progress or inflection of the sense. There is the alternate roll of his cumbrous cargo of words; his periods complete their revolutions at certain stated intervals, let the matter be longer or shorter, rough or smooth, round or square, different or the same. This monotonous and balanced mode of composition may be compared to that species of portrait-painting which prevailed about a century ago, in which each face was cast in a regular and preconceived mould. The eye-brows were arched mathematically as if with a pair of compasses, and the distances between the nose and mouth, the forehead and chin, determined according to a "*foregone conclusion*," and the features of the identical individual were afterwards accommodated to them, how they could!*

Horne Tooke used to maintain that no one could write a good prose style, who was not accustomed to express himself *vivâ voce*, or to talk in company. He argued that this was the fault of Addison's prose, and that its smooth, equable uniformity, and want of sharpness and spirit, arose from his not having familiarised his ear to the sound of his own voice, or at least

* See the Portraits of Kneller, Richardson, and others.

only among friends and admirers, where there was but little collision, dramatic fluctuation, or sudden contrariety of opinion to provoke animated discussion, and give birth to different intonations and lively transitions of speech. His style (in this view of it) was not indented, nor did it project from the surface. There was no stress laid on one word more than another—it did not hurry on or stop short, or sink or swell with the occasion: it was throughout equally insipid, flowing, and harmonious, and had the effect of a studied recitation rather than of a natural discourse. This would not have happened (so the Member for Old Sarum contended) had Addison laid himself out to argue at his club, or to speak in public; for then his ear would have caught the necessary modulations of sound arising out of the feeling of the moment, and he would have transferred them unconsciously to paper. Much might be said on both sides of this question*: but Mr. Tooke was himself an unintentional confirmation of his own argument; for the tone of his written compositions is as flat and unraised as his manner

* Goldsmith was not a talker, though he blurted out his good things now and then: yet his style is gay and voluble enough. Pope was also a silent man; and his prose is timid and constrained, and his verse inclining to the monotonous.

of speaking was hard and dry. Of the poet it is said by some one, that

> " He murmurs by the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own."

On the contrary, the celebrated person just alluded to might be said to grind the sentences between his teeth, which he afterwards committed to paper, and threw out crusts to the critics, or *bon-mots* to the Electors of Westminster (as we throw bones to the dogs,) without altering a muscle, and without the smallest tremulousness of voice or eye*! I certainly so far agree with the above theory as to conceive that no style is worth a farthing that is not *calculated to be read out, or that is not allied to* spirited conversation: but I at the same time think the process of modulation and inflection may be quite as complete, or more so, without the external enunciation; and that an author had better try the effect of his sentences on his

* As a singular example of steadiness of nerves, Mr. Tooke on one occasion had got upon the table at a public dinner to return thanks for his health having been drank. He held a bumper of wine in his hand, but he was received with considerable opposition by one party, and at the end of the disturbance, which lasted for a quarter of an hour, he found the wine glass still full to the brim.

stomach than on his ear. He may be deceived by the last, not by the first. No person, I imagine, can dictate a good style; or spout his own compositions with impunity. In the former case, he will flounder on before the sense or words are ready, sooner than suspend his voice in air; and in the latter, he can supply what intonation he pleases, without consulting his readers. Parliamentary speeches sometimes read well aloud; but we do not find, when such persons sit down to write, that the prose-style of public speakers and great orators is the best, most natural or varied of all others. It has almost always either a professional twang, a mechanical rounding off, or else is stunted and unequal. Charles Fox was the most rapid and even *hurried* of speakers; but his written style halts and creeps slowly along the ground*.—A

* I have been told, that when Sheridan was first introduced to Mr. Fox, what cemented an immediate intimacy between them was the following circumstance. Mr. Sheridan had been the night before to the House of Commons; and being asked what his impression was, said he had been principally struck with the difference of manner between Mr. Fox and Lord Stormont. The latter began by declaring in a slow, solemn, drawling, nasal tone that "when he considered the enormity and the unconstitutional tendency of the measures just proposed, he was hurried away in a torrent of passion and a whirlwind of impetuosity," pausing between

speaker is necessarily kept within bounds in expressing certain things, or in pronouncing a certain number of words, by the limits of the breath or power of respiration: certain sounds are observed to join in harmoniously or happily with others: an emphatic phrase must not be placed, where the power of utterance is enfeebled or exhausted, &c. All this must be attended to in writing, (and will be so unconsciously by a practised hand,) or there will be *hiatus in manuscriptis*. The words must be so arranged, in order to make an efficient readable style, as "to come trippingly off the tongue." Hence it seems that there is a natural measure of prose in the feeling of the subject and the power of expression in the voice, as there is an artificial one of verse in the number and co-ordination of the syllables; and I conceive that the trammels of the last do not (where they have been long worn) greatly assist the freedom or the exactness of the first.

every word and syllable; while the first said (speaking with the rapidity of lightning, and with breathless anxiety and impatience), that "such was the magnitude, such the importance, such the vital interest of this question, that he could not help imploring, he could not help adjuring the House to come to it with the utmost calmness, the utmost coolness, the utmost deliberation." This trait of discrimination instantly won Mr. Fox's heart.

Again, in poetry, from the restraints in many respects, a greater number of inversions, or a latitude in the transposition of words is allowed, which is not conformable to the strict laws of prose. Consequently, a poet will be at a loss, and flounder about for the common or (as we understand it) *natural* order of words in prose-composition. Dr. Johnson endeavoured to give an air of dignity and novelty to his diction by affecting the order of words usual in poetry. Milton's prose has not only this draw-back, but it has also the disadvantage of being formed on a classic model. It is like a fine translation from the Latin; and indeed, he wrote originally in Latin. The frequency of epithets and ornaments, too, is a resource for which the poet finds it difficult to obtain an equivalent. A direct, or simple prose-style seems to him bald and flat; and, instead of forcing an interest in the subject by severity of description and reasoning, he is repelled from it altogether by the absence of those obvious and meretricious allurements, by which his senses and his imagination have been hitherto stimulated and dazzled. Thus there is often at the same time a want of splendour and a want of energy in what he writes, without the invocation of the Muse—*invita Minervâ.* It is like setting a rope-

dancer to perform a tumbler's tricks—the hardness of the ground jars his nerves; or it is the same thing as a painter's attempting to carve a block of marble for the first time—the coldness chills him, the colourless uniformity distracts him, the precision of form demanded disheartens him. So in prose-writing, the severity of composition required damps the enthusiasm, and cuts off the resources of the poet. He is looking for beauty, when he should be seeking for truth; and aims at pleasure, which he can only communicate by increasing the sense of power in the reader. The poet spreads the colours of fancy, the illusions of his own mind, round every object, *ad libitum*; the prose-writer is compelled to extract his materials patiently and bit by bit, from his subject. What he adds of ornament, what he borrows from the pencil, must be sparing, and judiciously inserted. The first pretends to nothing but the immediate indulgence of his feelings: the last has a remote practical purpose. The one strolls out into the adjoining fields or groves to gather flowers: the other has a journey to go, sometimes through dirty roads, and at others through untrodden and difficult ways. It is this effeminacy, this immersion in sensual ideas, or craving after continual excitement, that

spoils the poet for his prose-tasks. He cannot wait till the effect comes of itself, or arises out of the occasion: he must force it upon all occasions, or his spirit droops and flags under a supposed imputation of dulness. He can never drift with the current, but is always hoisting sail, and has his streamers flying. He has got a striking simile on hand; he *lugs* it in with the first opportunity, and with little connexion, and so defeats his object. He has a story to tell: he tells it in the first page, and where it would come in well, has nothing to say; like Goldsmith, who having to wait upon a Noble Lord, was so full of himself and of the figure he should make, that he addressed a set speech, which he had studied for the occasion, to his Lordship's butler, and had just ended as the nobleman made his appearance. The prose ornaments of the poet are frequently beautiful in themselves, but do not assist the subject. They are pleasing excrescences—hindrances, not helps in an argument. The reason is, his embellishments in his own walk grow out of the subject by natural association; that is, beauty gives birth to kindred beauty, grandeur leads the mind on to greater grandeur. But in treating a common subject, the link is truth, force of illustration, weight of argument, not a graceful

harmony in the immediate ideas; and hence the obvious and habitual clue which before guided him is gone, and he hangs on his patch-work, tinsel finery at random, in despair, without propriety, and without effect. The poetical prose-writer stops to describe an object, if he admires it, or thinks it will bear to be dwelt on: the genuine prose-writer only alludes to or characterises it in passing, and with reference to his subject. The prose-writer is master of his materials: the poet is the slave of his style. Every thing showy, every thing extraneous tempts him, and he reposes idly on it: he is bent on pleasure, not on business. He aims at effect, at captivating the reader, and yet is contented with common-place ornaments, rather than none. Indeed, this last result must necessarily follow, where there is an ambition to shine, without the effort to dig for jewels in the mine of truth. The habits of a poet's mind are not those of industry or research: his images come to him, he does not go to them; and in prose-subjects, and dry matters of fact and close reasoning, the natural stimulus that at other times warms and rouses, deserts him altogether. He sees no unhallowed visions, he is inspired by no day-dreams. All is tame, literal, and barren, without the Nine.

Nor does he collect his strength to strike fire from the flint by the sharpness of collision, by the eagerness of his blows. He gathers roses, he steals colours from the rainbow. He lives on nectar and ambrosia. He "treads the primrose path of dalliance," or ascends "the highest heaven of invention," or falls flat to the ground. *He is nothing, if not fanciful!*

I shall proceed to explain these remarks, as well as I can, by a few instances in point.

It has always appeared to me that the most perfect prose-style, the most powerful, the most dazzling, the most daring, that which went the nearest to the verge of poetry, and yet never fell over, was Burke's. It has the solidity, and sparkling effect of the diamond: all other *fine writing* is like French paste or Bristol-stones in the comparison. Burke's style is airy, flighty, adventurous, but it never loses sight of the subject; nay, is always in contact with, and derives its increased or varying impulse from it. It may be said to pass yawning gulfs "on the unstedfast footing of a spear:" still it has an actual resting-place and tangible support under it—it is not suspended on nothing. It differs from poetry, as I conceive, like the chamois from the eagle: it climbs to an almost equal height, touches upon a cloud, overlooks a

precipice, is picturesque, sublime—but all the while, instead of soaring through the air, it stands upon a rocky cliff, clambers up by abrupt and intricate ways, and browzes on the roughest bark, or crops the tender flower. The principle which guides his pen is truth, not beauty—not pleasure, but power. He has no choice, no selection of subject to flatter the reader's idle taste, or assist his own fancy: he must take what comes, and make the most of it. He works the most striking effects out of the most unpromising materials, by the mere activity of his mind. He rises with the lofty, descends with the mean, luxuriates in beauty, gloats over deformity. It is all the same to him, so that he loses no particle of the exact, characteristic, extreme impression of the thing he writes about, and that he communicates this to the reader, after exhausting every possible mode of illustration, plain or abstracted, figurative or literal. Whatever stamps the original image more distinctly on the mind, is welcome. The nature of his task precludes continual beauty; but it does not preclude continual ingenuity, force, originality. He had to treat of political questions, mixed modes, abstract ideas, and his fancy (or poetry, if you will) was ingrafted on these artificially, and as it might sometimes

be thought, violently, instead of growing naturally out of them, as it would spring of its own accord from individual objects and feelings. There is a resistance in the *matter* to the illustration applied to it—the concrete and abstract are hardly co-ordinate; and therefore it is that, when the first difficulty is overcome, they must agree more closely in the essential qualities, in order that the coincidence may be complete. Otherwise, it is good for nothing; and you justly charge the author's style with being loose, vague, flaccid, and imbecil. The poet has been said

> "To make us heirs
> Of truth and pure delight in endless lays."

Not so the prose-writer, who always mingles clay with his gold, and often separates truth from mere pleasure. He can only arrive at the last through the first. In poetry, one pleasing or striking image obviously suggests another: the increasing the sense of beauty or grandeur is the principle of composition: in prose, the professed object is to impart conviction, and nothing can be admitted by way of ornament or relief, that does not add new force or clearness to the original conception. The two classes of ideas brought together by the

orator or impassioned prose-writer, to wit, the general subject and the particular image, are so far incompatible, and the identity must be more strict, more marked, more determinate, to make them coalesce to any practical purpose. Every word should be a blow: every thought should instantly grapple with its fellow. There must be a weight, a precision, a conformity from association in the tropes and figures of animated prose to fit them to their place in the argument, and make them *tell*, which may be dispensed with in poetry, where there is something much more congenial between the subject-matter and the illustration—

"Like beauty making beautiful old rime!"

What can be more remote, for instance, and at the same time more apposite, more *the same*, than the following comparison of the English Constitution to "the proud Keep of Windsor," in the celebrated Letter to a Noble Lord?

"Such are *their* ideas; such *their* religion, and such *their* law. But as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our church and state, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power—a fortress at

once and a temple*—shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion; as long as the British Monarchy—not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State—shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers; as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dykes of the low, fat, Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our Sovereign Lord the King, and his faithful subjects, the Lords and Commons of this realm—the triple cord which no man can break; the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation; the firm guarantees of each other's being, and each other's rights; the joint and several securities, each in its place and order, for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity—As long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe: and we are all safe together—the high from the blights of envy and the spoliations of rapacity; the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of con-

* "*Templum in modum arcis.*"
TACITUS of the Temple of Jerusalem.

tempt. Amen! and so be it: and so it will be,

'Dum domus Æneæ Capitoli immobile axum
Accolet; imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.'"

Nothing can well be more impracticable to a simile than the vague and complicated idea which is here embodied in one; yet how finely, how nobly it stands out, in natural grandeur, in royal state, with double barriers round it to answer for its identity, with "buttress, frieze, and coigne of 'vantage" for the imagination to "make its pendant bed and procreant cradle," till the idea is confounded with the object representing it—the wonder of a kingdom; and then how striking, how determined the descent, "at one fell swoop," to the "low, fat, Bedford level!" Poetry would have been bound to maintain a certain decorum, a regular balance between these two ideas; sterling prose throws aside all such idle respect to appearances, and with its pen, like a sword, "sharp and sweet," lays open the naked truth! The poet's Muse is like a mistress, whom we keep only while she is young and beautiful, *durante bene placito;* the Muse of prose is like a wife, whom we take during life, *for better for worse.* Burke's execution, like that of all good prose, savours of the texture of what he describes, and his pen

slides or drags over the ground of his subject, like the painter's pencil. The most rigid fidelity and the most fanciful extravagance meet, and are reconciled in his pages. I never pass Windsor but I think of this passage in Burke, and hardly know to which I am indebted most for enriching my moral sense, that or the fine picturesque stanza in Gray,

> "From Windsor's heights the expanse below
> Of mead, of lawn, of wood survey," &c.

I might mention that the so much admired description in one of the India speeches, of Hyder Ally's army (I think it is) which "now hung like a cloud upon the mountain, and now burst upon the plain like a thunder-bolt," would do equally well for poetry or prose. It is a bold and striking illustration of a naturally impressive object. This is not the case with the Abbe Sieyes's far-famed "pigeon-holes," nor with the comparison of the Duke of Bedford to "the Leviathan, tumbling about his unwieldy bulk in the ocean of royal bounty." Nothing here saves the description but the force of the invective; the startling truth, the vehemence, the remoteness, the aptitude, the perfect peculiarity and coincidence of the allusion. No writer would ever have thought of it but him-

self; no reader can ever forget it. What is there in common, one might say, between a Peer of the Realm, and "that sea-beast," of those

"Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream?"

Yet Burke has knit the two ideas together, and no man can put them asunder. No matter how slight and precarious the connection, the length of line it is necessary for the fancy to give out in keeping hold of the object on which it has fastened, he seems to have "put his hook in the nostrils" of this enormous creature of the crown, that empurples all its track through the glittering expanse of a profound and restless imagination!

In looking into the IRIS of last week, I find the following passages, in an article on the death of Lord Castlereagh.

"The splendour of Majesty leaving the British metropolis, careering along the ocean, and landing in the capital of the North, is distinguished only by glimpses through the dense array of clouds in which Death hid himself, while he struck down to the dust the stateliest courtier near the throne, and the broken train of which pursues and crosses the Royal progress wherever its glories are presented to the eye of imagination. . . . . .

"The same indefatigable mind—a mind of all work—which thus ruled the Continent with a rod of iron, the sword—within the walls of the House of Commons ruled a more distracted region with a more subtle and finely-tempered weapon, the tongue; and truly, if this *was* the only weapon his Lordship wielded there, where he had daily to encounter, and frequently almost alone, enemies more formidable than Buonaparte, it must be acknowledged that he achieved greater victories than Demosthenes or Cicero ever gained in far more easy fields of strife; nay, he wrought miracles of speech, outvying those miracles of song, which Orpheus is said to have performed, when not only men and brutes, but rocks, woods, and mountains, followed the sound of his voice and lyre. . . . . .

"But there was a worm at the root of the gourd that flourished over his head in the brightest sunshine of a court; both perished in a night, and in the morning, that which had been his glory and his shadow, covered him like a shroud; while the corpse, notwithstanding all his honours, and titles, and offices, lay unmoved in the place where it fell, till a judgment had been passed upon him, which the poorest peasant escapes when he dies in the ordinary course of nature."

SHEFFIELD ADVERTISER, Aug. 20, 1822.

This, it must be confessed, is very unlike Burke: yet Mr. Montgomery is a very pleasing poet, and a strenuous politician. The whole is *travelling out of the record*, and to no sort of purpose. The author is constantly getting away from the impression of his subject, to envelop himself in a cloud of images, which weaken and perplex, instead of adding force and clearness to it. Provided he is figurative, he does not care how commonplace or irrelevant the figures are, and he wanders on, delighted in a labyrinth of words, like a truant school-boy, who is only glad to have escaped from his task. He has a very slight hold of his subject, and is tempted to let it go for any fallacious ornament of style. How obscure and circuitous is the allusion to "the clouds in which Death hid himself, to strike down the stateliest courtier near the throne!" How hackneyed is the reference to Demosthenes and Cicero, and how utterly quaint and unmeaning is the ringing the changes upon Orpheus and his train of men, beasts, woods, rocks, and mountains in connection with Lord Castlereagh! But he is better pleased with this classical fable than with the death of the Noble Peer, and delights to dwell upon it, to however little use. So he is glad to take advantage of

the scriptural idea of a gourd; not to enforce, but as a relief to his reflections; and points his conclusion with a puling sort of common-place, that a peasant, who dies a natural death, has no Coroner's Inquest to sit upon him. All these are the faults of the ordinary poetical style. Poets think they are bound, by the tenour of their indentures to the Muses, to "elevate and surprise" in every line; and not having the usual resources at hand in common or abstracted subjects, aspire to the end without the means. They make, or pretend, an extraordinary interest where there is none. They are ambitious, vain, and indolent—more busy in preparing idle ornaments, which they take their chance of bringing in somehow or other, than intent on eliciting truths by fair and honest inquiry. It should seem as if they considered prose as a sort of waiting-maid to poetry, that could only be expected to wear her mistress's cast-off finery. Poets have been said to succeed best in fiction; and the account here given may in part explain the reason. That is to say, they must choose their own subject, in such a manner as to afford them continual opportunities of appealing to the senses and exciting the fancy. Dry details, abstruse speculations, do not give scope to

vividness of description; and, as they cannot bear to be considered dull, they become too often affected, extravagant, and insipid.

I am indebted to Mr. Coleridge for the comparison of poetic prose to the second-hand finery of a lady's maid (just made use of). He himself is an instance of his own observation, and (what is even worse) of the opposite fault—an affectation of quaintness and originality. With bits of tarnished lace and worthless frippery, he assumes a sweeping oriental costume, or borrows the stiff dresses of our ancestors, or starts an eccentric fashion of his own. He is swelling and turgid—everlastingly aiming to be greater than his subject; filling his fancy with fumes and vapours in the pangs and throes of miraculous parturition, and bringing forth only *still births*. He has an incessant craving, as it were, to exalt every idea into a metaphor, to expand every sentiment into a lengthened mystery, voluminous and vast, confused and cloudy. His style is not succinct, but incumbered with a train of words and images that have no practical, and only a possible relation to one another—that add to its stateliness, but impede its march. One of his sentences winds its "forlorn way obscure" over the page like a patriarchal procession with camels laden, wreathed turbans, household

wealth, the whole riches of the author's mind poured out upon the barren waste of his subject. The palm-tree spreads its sterile branches overhead, and the land of promise is seen in the distance. All this is owing to his wishing to overdo every thing—to make something more out of every thing than it is, or than it is worth. The simple truth does not satisfy him—no direct proposition fills up the moulds of his understanding. All is foreign, far-fetched, irrelevant, laboured, unproductive. To read one of his disquisitions is like hearing the variations to a piece of music without the score. Or, to vary the simile, he is not like a man going a journey by the stage-coach along the high-road, but is always getting into a balloon, and mounting into the air, above the plain ground of prose. Whether he soars to the empyrean, or dives to the centre (as he sometimes does), it is equally to get away from the question before him, and to prove that he owes every thing to his own mind. His object is to invent; he scorns to imitate. The business of prose is the contrary. But Mr. Coleridge is a poet, and his thoughts are free.

I think the poet-laureat is a much better prose-writer. His style has an antique quaintness, with a modern familiarity. He has just a

sufficient sprinkling of *archaisms*, of allusions to old Fuller, and Burton, and Latimer, to set off or qualify the smart flippant tone of his apologies for existing abuses, or the ready, galling virulence of his personal invectives. Mr. Southey is a faithful historian, and no inefficient partisan. In the former character, his mind is tenacious of facts; and in the latter, his spleen and jealousy prevent the "extravagant and erring spirit" of the poet from losing itself in Fancy's endless maze. He "stoops to *earth*," at least, and prostitutes his pen to some purpose (not at the same time losing his own soul, and gaining nothing by it)—and he vilifies Reform, and praises the reign of George III. in good set terms, in a straightforward, intelligible, practical, pointed way. He is not buoyed up by conscious power out of the reach of common apprehensions, but makes the most of the obvious advantages he possesses. You may complain of a pettiness and petulance of manner, but certainly there is no want of spirit or facility of execution. He does not waste powder and shot in the air, but loads his piece, takes a level aim, and hits his mark. One would say (though his Muse is ambidexter) that he wrote prose with his right hand; there is nothing awkward, circuitous, or feeble in it. "The words of Mercury

are harsh after the songs of Apollo:" but this would not apply to him. His prose-lucubrations are pleasanter reading than his poetry. Indeed, he is equally practised and voluminous in both; and it is no improbable conjecture, that Mr. Southey may have had some idea of rivalling the reputation of Voltaire in the extent, the spirit, and the versatility of his productions in prose and verse, except that he has written no tragedies but Wat Tyler!

To my taste, the Author of Rimini, and Editor of the Examiner, is among the best and least corrupted of our poetical prose-writers. In his light but well supported columns we find the raciness, the sharpness, and sparkling effect of poetry, with little that is extravagant or far-fetched, and no turgidity or pompous pretension. Perhaps there is too much the appearance of relaxation and trifling (as if he had escaped the shackles of rhyme), a caprice, a levity, and a disposition to innovate in words and ideas. Still the genuine master-spirit of the prose-writer is there; the tone of lively, sensible conversation; and this may in part arise from the author's being himself an animated talker. Mr. Hunt wants something of the heat and earnestness of the political partisan; but his familiar and miscellaneous papers have all

the ease, grace, and point of the best style of Essay-writing. Many of his effusions in the INDICATOR show, that if he had devoted himself exclusively to that mode of writing, he inherits more of the spirit of Steele than any man since his time.

Lord Byron's prose is bad; that is to say, heavy, laboured, and coarse: he tries to knock some one down with the butt-end of every line, which defeats his object—and the style of the Author of Waverley (if he comes fairly into this discussion) as mere style, is villainous. It is pretty plain he is a poet; for the sound of names runs mechanically in his ears, and he rings the changes unconsciously on the same words in a sentence, like the same rhymes in a couplet.

Not to spin out this discussion too much, I would conclude by observing, that some of the old English prose-writers (who were not poets) are the best, and, at the same time, the most *poetical* in the favourable sense. Among these we may reckon some of the old divines, and Jeremy Taylor at the head of them. There is a flush like the dawn over his writings; the sweetness of the rose, the freshness of the morning-dew. There is a softness in his style, proceeding from the tenderness of his heart:

but his head is firm, and his hand is free. His materials are as finely wrought up as they are original and attractive in themselves. Milton's prose-style savours too much of poetry, and, as I have already hinted, of an imitation of the Latin. Dryden's is perfectly unexceptionable, and a model, in simplicity, strength, and perspicuity, for the subjects he treated of.

ESSAY II.

ON DREAMS.

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ON DREAMS.

Dr. Spurzheim, in treating of the *Physiology of the Brain*, has the following curious passage:

"The state of somnambulism equally proves the plurality of the organs. This is a state of incomplete sleep, wherein several organs are watching. It is known that the brain acts upon the external world by means of voluntary motion, of the voice, and of the five external senses. Now, if in sleeping some organs be active, dreams take place; if the action of the brain be propagated to the muscles, there follow motions; if the action of the brain be propagated to the vocal organs, the sleeping person speaks. Indeed, it is known that sleeping persons dream and speak; others dream, speak, hear, and answer; others still dream, rise, do various things, and walk. This latter state is called somnambulism, that is, the state of walking during sleep. Now, as the ear can hear, so the eyes may see, while the other organs sleep; and

there are facts quite positive which prove that several persons in the state of somnambulism have seen, but always with open eyes. There are also convulsive fits, in which the patients see without hearing, and *vice versâ*. Some somnambulists do things of which they are not capable in a state of watching; and dreaming persons reason sometimes better than they do when awake. This phenomenon is not astonishing," &c.—PHYSIOGNOMICAL SYSTEM OF DRS. GALL AND SPURZHEIM, p. 217.

There is here a very singular mixing up of the flattest truisms with the most gratuitous assumptions; so that the one being told with great gravity, and the other delivered with the most familiar air, one is puzzled in a cursory perusal to distinguish which is which. This is an art of stultifying the reader, like that of the juggler, who shows you some plain matter-of-fact experiment just as he is going to play off his capital trick. The mind is, by this alternation of style, thrown off its guard; and between wondering first at the absurdity, and then at the superficiality of the work, becomes almost a convert to it. A thing exceedingly questionable is stated so roundly, you think there must be something in it: the plainest proposition is put in so doubtful and cautious a manner, you

conceive the writer must see a great deal farther into the subject than you do. You mistrust your ears and eyes, and are in a fair way to resign the use of your understanding. It is a fine style of *mystifying*. Again, it is the practice with the German school, and in particular with Dr. Spurzheim, to run counter to common sense and the best authenticated opinions. They must always be more knowing than every body else, and treat the wisdom of the ancients, and the wisdom of the moderns, much in the same supercilious way. It has been taken for granted generally that people see with their eyes; and therefore it is stated in the above passage as a discovery of the author, "imparted in dreadful secresy," that sleep-walkers always see with their eyes open. The meaning of which is, that we are not to give too implicit or unqualified an assent to the principle, at which modern philosophers have arrived with some pains and difficulty, that we acquire our ideas of external objects through the senses. The *transcendental* sophists wish to back out of that, as too conclusive and well-defined a position. They would be glad to throw the whole of what has been done on this question into confusion again, in order to begin *de novo*, like children who construct houses with cards,

and when the pack is built up, shuffle them all together on the table again. These intellectual Sysiphuses are always rolling the stone of knowledge up a hill, for the perverse pleasure of rolling it down again. Having gone as far as they can in the direction of reason and good sense, rather than seem passive or the slaves of any opinion, they turn back with a wonderful look of sagacity to all sorts of exploded prejudices and absurdity. It is a pity that we cannot *let well done alone*, and that after labouring for centuries to remove ignorance, we set our faces with the most wilful officiousness against the stability of knowledge. The *Physiognomical System* of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim is full of this sort of disgusting cant. We are still only to *believe in all unbelief*—in what they tell us. The less credulous we are of other things, the more faith we shall have in reserve for them: by exhausting our stock of scepticism and caution on such obvious matters of fact as that people always see with their eyes open, we shall be prepared to swallow their crude and extravagant theories whole, and not be astonished at "the phenomenon, that persons sometimes reason better asleep than awake!"

I have alluded to this passage because I myself am (or used some time ago to be) a sleep-

walker; and know how the thing is. In this sort of disturbed, unsound sleep, the eyes are not closed, and are attracted by the light. I used to get up and go towards the window, and make violent efforts to throw it open. The air in some measure revived me, or I might have tried to fling myself out. I saw objects indistinctly, the houses, for instance, facing me on the opposite side of the street; but still it was some time before I could recognise them or recollect where I was: that is, I was still asleep, and the dimness of my senses (as far as it prevailed) was occasioned by the greater numbness of my memory. This phenomenon is not astonishing, unless we chuse in all such cases to put the cart before the horse. For in fact, it is the mind that sleeps, and the senses (so to speak) only follow the example. The mind dozes, and the eye-lids close in consequence: we do not go to sleep, because we shut our eyes. I can, however, speak to the fact of the eyes being open, when their sense is shut; or rather, when we are unable to draw just inferences from it. It is generally in the night-time indeed, or in a strange place, that the circumstance happens; but as soon as the light dawns on the recollection, the obscurity and perplexity of the senses clear up. The external impression is made before, much

in the same manner as it is after we are awake; but it does not lead to the usual train of associations connected with that impression; *e. g.* the name of the street or town where we are, who lives at the opposite house, how we came to sleep in the room where we are, &c.; all which are ideas belonging to our waking experience, and are at this time cut off or greatly disturbed by sleep. It is just the same as when persons recover from a swoon, and fix their eyes unconsciously on those about them, for a considerable time before they recollect where they are. Would any one but a German physiologist think it necessary to assure us that at this time they see, but with their eyes open, or pretend that though they have lost all memory or understanding during their fainting fit, their minds act then more vigorously and freely than ever, because they are not distracted by outward impressions? The appeal is made to the outward sense, in the instances we have seen; but the mind is deaf to it, because its functions are for the time gone. It is ridiculous to pretend with this author, that in sleep some of the organs of the mind rest, while others are active: it might as well be pretended that in sleep one eye watches while the other is shut. The stupor is general: the faculty of thought

itself is impaired; and whatever ideas we have, instead of being confined to any particular faculty or the impressions of any one sense, and invigorated thereby, float at random from object to object, from one class of impressions to another, without coherence or control. The *conscious* or connecting link between our ideas, which forms them into separate groups or compares different parts and views of a subject together, seems to be that which is principally wanting in sleep; so that any idea that presents itself in this anarchy of the mind is lord of the ascendant for the moment, and is driven out by the next straggling notion that comes across it. The bundles of thought are, as it were, untied, loosened from a common centre, and drift along the stream of fancy as it happens. Hence the confusion (not the concentration of the faculties) that continually takes place in this state of half-perception. The mind takes in but one thing at a time, but one part of a subject, and therefore cannot correct its sudden and heterogeneous transitions from one momentary impression to another by a larger grasp of understanding. Thus we confound one person with another, merely from some accidental coincidence, the name or the place where we have seen them, or their having been concerned with

us in some particular transaction the evening before. They lose and regain their proper identity perhaps half a dozen times in this rambling way; nor are we able (though we are somewhat incredulous and surprised at these compound creations) to detect the error, from not being prepared to trace the same connected subject of thought to a number of varying and successive ramifications, or to form the idea of a *whole*. We think that Mr. Such-a-one did so and so: then, from a second face coming across us, like the sliders of a magic lantern, it was not he, but another; then some one calls him by his right name, and he is himself again. We are little shocked at these gross contradictions; for if the mind was capable of perceiving them in all their absurdity, it would not be liable to fall into them. It runs into them for the same reason that it is hardly conscious of them when made.

——" That which was now a horse, a bear, a cloud,
Even with a thought the rack dislimns,
And makes it indistinct as water is in water."

The difference, so far then, between sleeping and waking seems to be, that in the latter we have a greater range of conscious recollections, a larger discourse of reason, and associate ideas

in longer trains and more as they are connected one with another in the order of nature; whereas in the former, any two impressions, that meet or are alike, join company, and then are parted again, without notice, like the froth from the wave. So in madness, there is, I should apprehend, the same tyranny of the imagination over the judgment; that is, the mind has slipped its cable, and single images meet, and jostle, and unite suddenly together, without any power to arrange or compare them with others, with which they are connected in the world of reality. There is a continual phantasmagoria: whatever shapes and colours come together are by the heat and violence of the brain referred to external nature, without regard to the order of time, place, or circumstance. From the same want of continuity, we often forget our dreams so speedily: if we cannot catch them as they are passing out at the door, we never set eyes on them again. There is no clue or thread of imagination to trace them by. In a morning sometimes we have had a dream that we try in vain to recollect; it is gone, like the rainbow from the cloud. At other times (so evanescent is their texture) we forget that we have dreamt at all; and at these times the mind seems to have been a mere blank, and sleep presents only

an image of death. Hence has arisen the famous dispute, *Whether the soul thinks always?*—on which Mr. Locke and different writers have bestowed so much tedious and unprofitable discussion; some maintaining that the mind was like a watch that goes continually, though more slowly and irregularly at one time than another; while the opposite party contended that it often stopped altogether, bringing the example of sound sleep as an argument, and desiring to know what proof we could have of thoughts passing through the mind, of which it was itself perfectly unconscious, and retained not the slightest recollection. I grant, we often sleep so sound, or have such faint imagery passing through the brain, that if we awake by degrees, we forget it altogether: we recollect our first waking, and perhaps some imperfect suggestions of fancy just before; but beyond this, all is mere oblivion. But I have observed that whenever I have been waked up suddenly, and not left to myself to recover from this state of mental torpor, I have been always dreaming of something, *i. e.* thinking, according to the tenor of the question. Let any one call you at any time, however fast asleep you may be, you make out their voice in the first surprise to be like some one's you were thinking of in your sleep. Let

an accidental noise, the falling of something in the next room, rouse you up, you constantly find something to associate it with, or translate it back into the language of your slumbering thoughts. You are never taken completely at a *nonplus*—summoned, as it were, out of a state of nonexistence. It is easy for any one to try the experiment upon himself; that is, to examine every time he is waked up suddenly, so that his waking and sleeping state are brought into immediate contact, whether he has not in all such cases been dreaming of something, and not fairly *caught napping*. For myself, I think I can speak with certainty. It would indeed be rather odd to awake out of such an absolute privation and suspense of thought as is contended for by the partisans of the contrary theory. It would be a peep into the grave, a consciousness of death, an escape from the world of non-entity!

The vividness of our impressions in dreams, of which so much has been said, seems to be rather apparent than real; or, if this mode of expression should be objected to as unwarrantable, rather physical than mental. It is a vapour, a fume, the effect of the "heat-oppressed brain." The imagination gloats over an idea, and doats at the same time. However warm or

brilliant the colouring of these changing appearances, they vanish with the dawn. They are put out by our waking thoughts, as the sun puts out a candle. It is unlucky that we sometimes remember the heroic sentiments, the profound discoveries, the witty repartees we have uttered in our sleep. The one turn to bombast, the others are mere truisms, and the last absolute nonsense. Yet we clothe them certainly with a fancied importance at the moment. This seems to be merely the effervescence of the blood or of the brain, physically acting. It is an odd thing in sleep, that we not only fancy we see different persons, and talk to them, but that we hear them make answers, and startle us with an observation or a piece of news; and though we of course put the answer into their mouths, we have no idea beforehand what it will be, and it takes us as much by surprise as it would in reality. This kind of successful ventriloquism which we practise upon ourselves may perhaps be in some measure accounted for from the short-sightedness and incomplete consciousness which were remarked above as the peculiar characteristics of sleep.

The power of prophesying or foreseeing things in our sleep, as from a higher and more abstracted sphere of thought, need not be here argued

upon. There is, however, a sort of profundity in sleep; and it may be usefully consulted as an oracle in this way. It may be said, that the voluntary power is suspended, and things come upon us as unexpected revelations, which we keep out of our thoughts at other times. We may be aware of a danger, that yet we do not chuse, while we have the full command of our faculties, to acknowledge to ourselves: the impending event will then appear to us as a dream, and we shall most likely find it verified afterwards. Another thing of no small consequence is, that we may sometimes discover our tacit, and almost unconscious sentiments, with respect to persons or things in the same way. We are not hypocrites in our sleep. The curb is taken off from our passions, and our imagination wanders at will. When awake, we check these rising thoughts, and fancy we have them not. In dreams, when we are off our guard, they return securely and unbidden. We may make this use of the infirmity of our sleeping metamorphosis, that we may repress any feelings of this sort that we disapprove in their incipient state, and detect, ere it be too late, an unwarrantable antipathy or fatal passion. Infants cannot disguise their thoughts from others; and in sleep we reveal the secret to ourselves.

It should appear that I have never been in love, for the same reason. I never dream of the face of any one I am particularly attached to. I have thought almost to agony of the same person for years, nearly without ceasing, so as to have her face always before me, and to be haunted by a perpetual consciousness of disappointed passion, and yet I never in all that time dreamt of this person more than once or twice, and then not vividly. I conceive, therefore, that this perseverance of the imagination in a fruitless track must have been owing to mortified pride, to an intense desire and hope of good in the abstract, more than to love, which I consider as an individual and involuntary passion, and which therefore, when it is strong, must predominate over the fancy in sleep. I think myself into love, and dream myself out of it. I should have made a very bad Endymion, in this sense; for all the time the heavenly Goddess was shining over my head, I should never have had a thought about her. If I had waked and found her gone, I might have been in a considerable *taking*. Coleridge used to laugh at me for my want of the faculty of dreaming; and once, on my saying that I did not like the preternatural stories in the Arabian Nights (for the comic parts I love dearly), he

said, "That must be because you never dream. There is a class of poetry built on this foundation, which is surely no inconsiderable part of our nature, since we are asleep and building up imaginations of this sort half our time." I had nothing to say against it: it was one of his conjectural subtleties, in which he excels all the persons I ever knew; but I had some satisfaction in finding afterwards, that I had Bishop Atterbury expressly on my side in this question, who has recorded his detestation of SINBAD THE SAILOR, in an interesting letter to Pope. Perhaps he too did not dream!

Yet I dream sometimes; I dream of the Louvre —*Intus et in cute.* I dreamt I was there a few weeks ago, and that the old scene returned—that I looked for my favourite pictures, and found them gone or erased. The dream of my youth came upon me; a glory and a vision unutterable, that comes no more but in darkness and in sleep: my heart rose up, and I fell on my knees, and lifted up my voice and wept, and I awoke. I also dreamt a little while ago, that I was reading the New Eloise to an old friend, and came to the concluding passage in Julia's farewell letter, which had much the same effect upon me.—The words are, "*Trop heureuse d'acheter au prix de ma vie le droit de t'aimer*

toujours sans crime et de te le dire encore une fois, avant que je meurs!" I used to sob over this passage twenty years ago; and in this dream about it lately, I seemed to live these twenty years over again in one short moment! I do not dream ordinarily; and there are people who never could see any thing in the *New Eloise.* Are we not quits!

ESSAY III.

ON THE CONVERSATION OF AUTHORS.

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An author is bound to write—well or ill, wisely or foolishly: it is his trade. But I do not see that he is bound to talk, any more than he is bound to dance, or ride, or fence better than other people. Reading, study, silence, thought, are a bad introduction to loquacity. It would be sooner learnt of chambermaids and tapsters. He understands the art and mystery of his own profession, which is book-making: what right has any one to expect or require him to do more—to make a bow gracefully on entering or leaving a room, to make love charmingly, or to make a fortune at all? In all things there is a division of labour. A lord is no less amorous for writing ridiculous love-letters, nor a General less successful for wanting wit and honesty. Why then may not a poor author say nothing, and yet pass muster? Set him on the top of a stage-coach, he will make

no figure; he is *mum-chance*, while the slang-wit flies about as fast as the dust, with the crack of the whip and the clatter of the horses' heels: put him in a ring of boxers, he is a poor creature—

"And of his port as meek as is a maid."

Introduce him to a tea-party of milliner's girls, and they are ready to split their sides with laughing at him: over his bottle, he is dry: in the drawing-room, rude or awkward: he is too refined for the vulgar, too clownish for the fashionable: —"he is one that cannot make a good leg, one that cannot eat a mess of broth cleanly, one that cannot ride a horse without spur-galling, one that cannot salute a woman, and look on her directly:"—in courts, in camps, in town and country, he is a cypher or a butt: he is good for nothing but a laughing-stock or a scare-crow. You can scarcely get a word out of him for love or money. He knows nothing. He has no notion of pleasure or business, or of what is going on in the world; he does not understand cookery (unless he is a doctor in divinity) nor surgery, nor chemistry (unless he is a *Quidnunc*) nor mechanics, nor husbandry and tillage (unless he is as great an admirer of Tull's Husbandry, and has profited as much by it as the

philosopher of Botley)—no, nor music, painting, the Drama, nor the Fine Arts in general.

"What the deuce is it then, my good sir, that he does understand, or know any thing about?"

"BOOKS, VENUS, BOOKS!"

"What books?"

"Not receipt-books, Madona, nor account-books, nor books of pharmacy, or the veterinary art (they belong to their respective callings and handicrafts) but books of liberal taste and general knowledge."

"What do you mean by that general knowledge which implies not a knowledge of things in general, but an ignorance (by your own account) of every one in particular: or by that liberal taste which scorns the pursuits and acquirements of the rest of the world in succession, and is confined exclusively, and by way of excellence, to what nobody takes an interest in but yourself, and a few idlers like yourself? Is this what the critics mean by the *belles-lettres*, and the study of humanity?"

Book-knowledge, in a word, then, is knowledge *communicable by books:* and it is general and liberal for this reason, that it is intelligible and interesting on the bare suggestion. That to which any one feels a romantic attachment, merely from finding it in a book, must be in-

teresting in itself: that which he instantly forms a lively and entire conception of, from seeing a few marks and scratches upon paper, must be taken from common nature: that which, the first time you meet with it, seizes upon the attention as a curious speculation, must exercise the general faculties of the human mind. There are certain broader aspects of society and views of things common to every subject, and more or less cognizable to every mind; and these the scholar treats and founds his claim to general attention upon them, without being chargeable with pedantry. The minute descriptions of fishing-tackle, of baits and flies in Walton's Complete Angler, make that work a great favourite with sportsmen: the alloy of an amiable humanity, and the modest but touching descriptions of familiar incidents and rural objects scattered through it, have made it an equal favourite with every reader of taste and feeling. Montaigne's Essays, Dilworth's Spelling Book, and Fearn's Treatise on Contingent Remainders, are all equally books, but not equally adapted for all classes of readers. The two last are of no use but to school-masters and lawyers: but the first is a work we may recommend to any one to read who has ever thought at all, or who would learn to think justly on any subject. Persons of dif-

ferent trades and professions—the mechanic, the shop-keeper, the medical practitioner, the artist, &c. may all have great knowledge and ingenuity in their several vocations, the details of which will be very edifying to themselves, and just as incomprehensible to their neighbours: but over and above this professional and technical knowledge, they must be supposed to have a stock of common sense and common feeling to furnish subjects for common conversation, or to give them any pleasure in each other's company. It is to this common stock of ideas, spread over the surface, or striking its roots into the very centre of society, that the popular writer appeals, and not in vain; for he finds readers. It is of this finer essence of wisdom and humanity, "etherial mould, sky-tinctured," that books of the better sort are made. They contain the language of thought. It must happen that, in the course of time and the variety of human capacity, some persons will have struck out finer observations, reflections, and sentiments than others. These they have committed to books of memory, have bequeathed as a lasting legacy to posterity; and such persons have become standard authors. We visit at the shrine, drink in some measure of the inspiration, and cannot easily "breathe in other air less pure, accustomed to immortal

fruits." Are we to be blamed for this, because the vulgar and illiterate do not always understand us? The fault is rather in them, who are "confined and cabin'd in," each in their own particular sphere and compartment of ideas, and have not the same refined medium of communication or abstracted topics of discourse. Bring a number of literary, or of illiterate persons together, perfect strangers to each other, and see which party will make the best company. "Verily, we have our reward." We have made our election, and have no reason to repent it, if we were wise. But the misfortune is, we wish to have all the advantages on one side. We grudge, and cannot reconcile it to ourselves, that any one "should go about to cozen fortune, without the stamp of learning!" We think "because we are *scholars*, there shall be no more cakes and ale!" We don't know how to account for it, that bar-maids should gossip, or ladies whisper, or bullies roar, or fools laugh, or knaves thrive, without having gone through the same course of select study that we have! This vanity is preposterous, and carries its own punishment with it. Books are a world in themselves, it is true; but they are not the only world. The world itself is a volume larger than all the libraries in it. Learning is a sacred

deposit from the experience of ages; but it has not put all future experience on the shelf, or debarred the common herd of mankind from the use of their hands, tongues, eyes, ears, or understandings. Taste is a luxury for the privileged few: but it would be hard upon those who have not the same standard of refinement in their own minds that we suppose ourselves to have, if this should prevent them from having recourse, as usual, to their old frolics, coarse jokes, and horse-play, and getting through the wear and tear of the world, with such homely sayings and shrewd helps as they may. Happy is it, that the mass of mankind eat and drink, and sleep, and perform their several tasks, and do as they like without us—caring nothing for our scribblings, our carpings, and our quibbles; and moving on the same, in spite of our fine-spun distinctions, fantastic theories, and lines of demarcation, which are like the chalk-figures drawn on ball-room floors to be danced out before morning! In the field opposite the window where I write this, there is a country-girl picking stones: in the one next it, there are several poor women weeding the blue and red flowers from the corn: farther on, are two boys, tending a flock of sheep. What do they know or care about what I am writing about them, or ever will—

or what would they be the better for it, if they did? Or why need we despise

> " The wretched slave,
> Who like a lackey, from the rise to the set,
> Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night
> Sleeps in Elysium; next day, after dawn,
> Doth rise, and help Hyperion to his horse;
> And follows so the ever-running year
> With profitable labour to his grave?"

Is not this life as sweet as writing Ephemerides? But we put that which flutters the brain idly for a moment, and then is heard no more, in competition with nature, which exists every where, and lasts always. We not only underrate the force of nature, and make too much of art—but we also over-rate our own accomplishments and advantages derived from art. In the presence of clownish ignorance, or of persons without any great pretensions, real or affected, we are very much inclined to take upon ourselves, as the virtual representatives of science, art, and literature. We have a strong itch to show off and do the honours of civilization for all the great men whose works we have ever read, and whose names our auditors have never heard of, as noblemen's lacqueys, in the absence of their masters, give themselves airs of superiority over every one else. But though we

have read Congreve, a stage-coachman may be an over-match for us in wit: though we are deep-versed in the excellence of Shakspeare's colloquial style, a village beldam may outscold us: though we have read Machiavel in the original Italian, we may be easily outwitted by a clown: and though we have cried our eyes out over the New Eloise, a poor shepherd-lad, who hardly knows how to spell his own name, may "tell his tale, under the hawthorn in the dale," and prove a more thriving wooer. What then is the advantage we possess over the meanest of the mean? Why this, that we have read Congreve, Shakspeare, Machiavel, the New Eloise;—not that we are to have their wit, genius, shrewdness, or melting tenderness.

From speculative pursuits we must be satisfied with speculative benefits. From reading, too, we learn to write. If we have had the pleasure of studying the highest models of perfection in their kind, and can hope to leave any thing ourselves, however slight, to be looked upon as a model, or even a good copy in its way, we may think ourselves pretty well off, without engrossing all the privileges of learning, and all the blessings of ignorance into the bargain.

It has been made a question whether there have not been individuals in common life of

greater talents and powers of mind than the most celebrated writers—whether, for instance, such or such a Liverpool merchant, or Manchester manufacturer, was not a more sensible man than Montaigne, of a longer reach of understanding than the Viscount of St. Albans. There is no saying, unless some of these illustrious obscure had communicated their important discoveries to the world. But then they would have been authors!—On the other hand, there is a set of critics who fall into the contrary error; and suppose that unless the proof of capacity is laid before all the world, the capacity itself cannot exist; looking upon all those who have not commenced authors, as literally "stocks and stones, and worse than senseless things." I remember trying to convince a person of this class, that a young lady, whom he knew something of, the niece of a celebrated authoress, had just the same sort of fine *tact* and ironical turn in conversation, that her relative had shown in her writings when young. The only answer I could get was an incredulous smile, and the observation that when she wrote any thing as good as ——, or ——, he might think her as clever. I said all I meant was, that she had the same family talents, and asked whether he thought that if Miss —— had not

been very clever, as a mere girl, before she wrote her novels, she would ever have written them? It was all in vain. He still stuck to his text, and was convinced that the niece was a little fool compared to her aunt at the same age; and if he had known the aunt formerly, he would have had just the same opinion of *her*. My friend was one of those who have a settled persuasion that it is the book that makes the author, and not the author the book. That's a strange opinion for a great philosopher to hold. But he wilfully shuts his eyes to the germs and indistinct workings of genius, and treats them with supercilious indifference, till they stare him in the face through the press; and then takes cognizance only of the overt acts and published evidence. This is neither a proof of wisdom, nor the way to be wise. It is partly pedantry and prejudice, and partly feebleness of judgment and want of magnanimity. He dare as little commit himself on the character of books, as of individuals, till they are stamped by the public. If you show him any work for his approbation, he asks, "Whose is the superscription?"—He judges of genius by its shadow, reputation—of the metal by the coin. He is just the reverse of another person whom I know—for, as G—— never allows a

particle of merit to any one till it is acknowledged by the whole world, C—— withholds his tribute of applause from every person, in whom any mortal but himself can descry the least glimpse of understanding. He would be thought to look farther into a millstone than any body else. He would have others see with his eyes, and take their opinions from him on trust, in spite of their senses. The more obscure and defective the indications of merit, the greater his sagacity and candour in being the first to point them out. He looks upon what he nicknames *a man of genius*, but as the breath of his nostrils, and the clay in the potter's hands. If any such inert, unconscious mass, under the fostering care of the modern Prometheus, is kindled into life,—begins to see, speak, and move, so as to attract the notice of other people,—our jealous patroniser of latent worth in that case throws aside, scorns, and hates his own handy-work; and deserts his intellectual offspring from the moment they can go alone and shift for themselves.—But to pass on to our more immediate subject.

The conversation of authors is not so good as might be imagined: but, such as it is (and with rare exceptions) it is better than any other. The proof of which is, that, when you are used to it,

you cannot put up with any other. That of mixed company becomes utterly intolerable—you cannot sit out a common tea and card party, at least, if they pretend to talk at all. You are obliged in despair to cut all your old acquaintance who are not *au fait* on the prevailing and most smartly contested topics, who are not imbued with the high gusto of criticism and *virtù*. You cannot bear to hear a friend whom you have not seen for many years, tell at how much a yard he sells his laces and tapes, when he means to move into his next house, when he heard last from his relations in the country, whether trade is alive or dead, or whether Mr. Such-a-one gets to look old. This sort of neighbourly gossip will not go down after the high-raised tone of literary conversation. The last may be very absurd, very unsatisfactory, and full of turbulence and heart-burnings; but it has a zest in it which more ordinary topics of news or family-affairs do not supply. Neither will the conversation of what we understand by *gentlemen* and men of fashion, do after that of men of letters. It is flat, insipid, stale, and unprofitable, in the comparison. They talk about much the same things, pictures, poetry, politics, plays; but they do it worse, and at a sort of vapid secondhand. They, in fact, talk out of newspapers and maga-

zines, what *we write there.* They do not feel the same interest in the subjects they affect to handle with an air of fashionable condescension, nor have they the same knowledge of them, if they were ever so much in earnest in displaying it. If it were not for the wine and the dessert, no author in his senses would accept an invitation to a well-dressed dinner-party, except out of pure good-nature and unwillingness to disoblige by his refusal. Persons in high life talk almost entirely by rote. There are certain established modes of address, and certain answers to them expected as a matter of course, as a point of etiquette. The studied forms of politeness do not give the greatest possible scope to an exuberance of wit or fancy. The fear of giving offence destroys sincerity, and without sincerity there can be no true enjoyment of society, nor unfettered exertion of intellectual activity.—Those who have been accustomed to live with the great are hardly considered as conversible persons in literary society. They are not to be talked with, any more than puppets or echos. They have no opinions but what will please; and you naturally turn away, as a waste of time and words, from attending to a person who just before assented to what you said, and whom you find, the moment after, from something

that unexpectedly or perhaps by design drops from him, to be of a totally different way of thinking. This *bush-fighting* is not regarded as fair play among scientific men. As fashionable conversation is a sacrifice to politeness, so the conversation of low life is nothing but rudeness. They contradict you without giving a reason, or if they do, it is a very bad one—swear, talk loud, repeat the same thing fifty times over, get to calling names, and from words proceed to blows. You cannot make companions of servants, or persons in an inferior station in life. You may talk to them on matters of business, and what they have to do for you (as lords talk to bruisers on subjects of *fancy*, or country-squires to their grooms on horse-racing) but out of that narrow sphere, to any general topic, you cannot lead them; the conversation soon flags, and you go back to the old question, or are obliged to break up the sitting for want of ideas in common. The conversation of authors is better than that of most professions. It is better than that of lawyers, who talk nothing but *double entendre*—than that of physicians, who talk of the approaching deaths of the College, or the marriage of some new practitioner with some rich widow—than that of divines, who talk of the last place

they dined at—than that of University-men, who make stale puns, repeat the refuse of the London newspapers, and affect an ignorance of Greek and mathematics—it is better than that of players, who talk of nothing but the Green-room, and rehearse the scholar, the wit, or the fine gentleman, like a part on the stage—or than that of ladies, who, whatever you talk of, think of nothing, and expect you to think of nothing, but themselves. It is not easy to keep up a conversation with women in company. It is thought a piece of rudeness to differ from them: it is not quite fair to ask them a reason for what they say. You are afraid of pressing too hard upon them: but where you cannot differ openly and unreservedly, you cannot heartily agree. It is not so in France. There the women talk of things in general, and reason better than the men in this country. They are mistresses of the intellectual foils. They are adepts in all the topics. They know what is to be said for and against all sorts of questions, and are lively and full of mischief into the bargain. They are very subtle. They put you to your trumps immediately. Your logic is more in requisition even than your gallantry. You must argue as well as bow yourself into the good graces of these

modern Amazons. What a situation for an Englishman to be placed in*!

The fault of literary conversation in general is its too great tenaciousness. It fastens upon a subject, and will not let it go. It resembles a battle rather than a skirmish, and makes a toil of a pleasure. Perhaps it does this from necessity, from a consciousness of wanting the more familiar graces, the power to sport and trifle, to touch lightly and adorn agreeably, every view or turn of a question *en passant*, as it arises. Those who have a reputation to lose are too ambitious of shining, to please. "To excel in conversation," said an ingenious man, "one must not be always striving to say good things: to say one good thing, one must say many bad, and more indifferent ones." This desire to shine without the means at hand, often makes men silent:—

"The fear of being silent strikes us dumb."

A writer who has been accustomed to take a connected view of a difficult question, and to

* The topics of metaphysical argument having got into female society in France, is a proof how much they must have been discussed there generally, and how unfounded the charge is which we bring against them of excessive thoughtlessness and frivolity. The French (taken all together) are a more sensible, reflecting, and better informed people than the English.

work it out gradually in all its bearings, may be very deficient in that quickness and ease, which men of the world, who are in the habit of hearing a variety of opinions, who pick up an observation on one subject, and another on another, and who care about none any farther than the passing away of an idle hour, usually acquire. An author has studied a particular point—he has read, he has inquired, he has thought a great deal upon it: he is not contented to take it up casually in common with others, to throw out a hint, to propose an objection: he will either remain silent, uneasy, and dissatisfied, or he will begin at the beginning and go through with it to the end. He is for taking the whole responsibility upon himself. He would be thought to understand the subject better than others, or indeed would show that nobody else knows any thing about it. There are always three or four points on which the literary novice at his first outset in life fancies he can enlighten every company, and bear down all opposition: but he is cured of this Quixotic and pugnacious spirit, as he goes more into the world, where he finds that there are other opinions and other pretensions to be adjusted besides his own. When this asperity wears off, and a certain scholastic precocity is mellowed down, the conversation of men of letters becomes both interesting and

instructive. Men of the world have no fixed principles, no ground-work of thought: mere scholars have too much an object, a theory always in view, to which they wrest every thing, and not unfrequently, common sense itself. By mixing with society, they rub off their hardness of manner, and impracticable, offensive singularity, while they retain a greater depth and coherence of understanding. There is more to be learnt from them than from their books. This was a remark of Rousseau's, and it is a very true one. In the confidence and unreserve of private intercourse, they are more at liberty to say what they think, to put the subject in different and opposite points of view, to illustrate it more briefly and pithily by familiar expressions, by an appeal to individual character and personal knowledge—to bring in the limitation, to obviate misconception, to state difficulties on their own side of the argument, and answer them as well as they can. This would hardly agree with the prudery, and somewhat ostentatious claims of authorship. Dr. Johnson's conversation in Boswell's Life is much better than his published works: and the fragments of the opinions of celebrated men, preserved in their letters or in anecdotes of them, are justly sought after as invaluable for the same reason. For instance, what a

fund of sense there is in Grimm's Memoirs! We thus get at the essence of what is contained in their more laboured productions, without the affectation or formality.—Argument, again, is the death of conversation, if carried on in a spirit of hostility: but discussion is a pleasant and profitable thing, where you advance and defend your opinions as far as you can, and admit the truth of what is objected against them with equal impartiality; in short, where you do not pretend to set up for an oracle, but freely declare what you really know about any question, or suggest what has struck you as throwing a new light upon it, and let it pass for what it is worth. This tone of conversation was well described by Dr. Johnson, when he said of some party at which he had been present the night before—"We had good talk, sir!" As a general rule, there is no conversation worth any thing but between friends, or those who agree in the same leading views of a subject. Nothing was ever learnt by either side in a dispute. You contradict one another, will not allow a grain of sense in what your adversary advances, are blind to whatever makes against yourself, dare not look the question fairly in the face, so that you cannot avail yourself even of your real advantages, insist most on what you feel to be the

weakest points of your argument, and get more and more absurd, dogmatical, and violent every moment. Disputes for victory generally end to the dissatisfaction of all parties; and the one recorded in Gil Blas breaks up just as it ought. I once knew a very ingenious man, than whom, to take him in the way of common chit-chat or fireside gossip, no one could be more entertaining or rational. He would make an apt classical quotation, propose an explanation of a curious passage in Shakspeare's Venus and Adonis, detect a metaphysical error in Locke, would infer the volatility of the French character from the chapter in Sterne where the Count mistakes the feigned name of Yorick for a proof of his being the identical imaginary character in Hamlet (*Et vous êtes Yorick!*)—thus confounding words with things twice over—but let a difference of opinion be once hitched in, and it was all over with him. His only object from that time was to shut out common sense, and to be proof against conviction. He would argue the most ridiculous point (such as that there were two original languages) for hours together, nay, through the horologe. You would not suppose it was the same person. He was like an obstinate run-away horse, that takes the bit in his mouth, and becomes mischievous and unmanageable. He

had made up his mind to one thing, not to admit a single particle of what any one else said for or against him. It was all the difference between a man drunk or sober, sane or mad. It is the same when he once gets the pen in his hand. He has been trying to prove a contradiction in terms for the ten last years of his life, *viz.* that the Bourbons have the same right to the throne of France that the Brunswick family have to the throne of England. Many people think there is a want of honesty or a want of understanding in this. There is neither. But he will persist in an argument to the last pinch; he will yield, in absurdity, to no man!

This litigious humour is bad enough: but there is one character still worse, that of a person who goes into company, not to contradict, but to *talk at* you. This is the greatest nuisance in civilised society. Such a person does not come armed to defend himself at all points, but to unsettle, if he can, and throw a slur on all your favourite opinions. If he has a notion that any one in the room is fond of poetry, he immediately volunteers a contemptuous tirade against the idle jingle of verse. If he suspects you have a delight in pictures, he endeavours, not by fair argument, but by a side-wind, to put you out of conceit with so frivolous an art. If you have a

taste for music, he does not think much good is to be done by this tickling of the ears. If you speak in praise of a comedy, he does not see the use of wit: if you say you have been to a tragedy, he shakes his head at this mockery of human misery, and thinks it ought to be prohibited. He tries to find out beforehand whatever it is that you take a particular pride or pleasure in, that he may annoy your self-love in the tenderest point (as if he were probing a wound) and make you dissatisfied with yourself and your pursuits for several days afterwards. A person might as well make a practice of throwing out scandalous aspersions against your dearest friends or nearest relations, by way of ingratiating himself into your favour. Such ill-timed impertinence is "villainous, and shews a pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

The soul of conversation is sympathy.—Authors should converse chiefly with authors, and their talk should be of books. "When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war." There is nothing so pedantic as pretending not to be pedantic. No man can get above his pursuit in life: it is getting above himself, which is impossible. There is a Free-masonry in all things. You can only speak to be understood, but this you cannot be, except by those who are

in the secret. Hence an argument has been drawn to supersede the necessity of conversation altogether; for it has been said, that there is no use in talking to people of sense, who know all that you can tell them, nor to fools, who will not be instructed. There is, however, the smallest encouragement to proceed, when you are conscious that the more you really enter into a subject, the farther you will be from the comprehension of your hearers—and that the more proofs you give of any position, the more odd and out-of-the-way they will think your notions. C—— is the only person who can talk to all sorts of people, on all sorts of subjects, without caring a farthing for their understanding one word he says—and *he* talks only for admiration and to be listened to, and accordingly the least interruption puts him out. I firmly believe he would make just the same impression on half his audiences, if he purposely repeated absolute nonsense with the same voice and manner and inexhaustible flow of undulating speech! In general, wit shines only by reflection. You must take your cue from your company—must rise as they rise, and sink as they fall. You must see that your good things, your knowing allusions, are not flung away, like the pearls in the adage. What a check it is to be asked a foolish ques-

tion; to find that the first principles are not understood! You are thrown on your back immediately, the conversation is stopped like a country-dance by those who do not know the figure. But when a set of adepts, of *illuminati*, get about a question, it is worth while to hear them talk. They may snarl and quarrel over it, like dogs; but they pick it bare to the bone, they masticate it thoroughly.

ESSAY IV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

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This was the case formerly at L—'s—where we used to have many lively skirmishes at their Thursday evening parties. I doubt whether the Small-coal man's musical parties could exceed them. Oh! for the pen of John Buncle to consecrate a *petit souvenir* to their memory!—There was L— himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun, and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half sentences as he does. His jests scald like tears: and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hair-brained vein of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the haunch of mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism!

How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! "And, in our flowing cups, many a good name and true was freshly remembered." Recollect (most sage and critical reader) that in all this I was but a guest! Need I go over the names? They were but the old everlasting set—Milton and Shakspeare, Pope and Dryden, Steele and Addison, Swift and Gay, Fielding, Smollet, Sterne, Richardson, Hogarth's prints, Claude's landscapes, the Cartoons at Hampton-court, and all those things, that, having once been, must ever be. The Scotch Novels had not then been heard of: so we said nothing about them. In general, we were hard upon the moderns. The author of the Rambler was only tolerated in Boswell's Life of him; and it was as much as any one could do to edge in a word for Junius. L— could not bear Gil Blas. This was a fault. I remember the greatest triumph I ever had was in persuading him, after some years' difficulty, that Fielding was better than Smollet. On one occasion, he was for making out a list of persons famous in history that one would wish to see again—at the head of whom were Pontius Pilate, Sir Thomas Browne, and Dr. Faustus—but we black-balled most of his list! But with what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors,

Donne, or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages *delicious!* He tried them on his palate as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them, like a roughness on the tongue. With what discrimination he hinted a defect in what he admired most—as in saying that the display of the sumptuous banquet in Paradise Regained was not in true keeping, as the simplest fare was all that was necessary to tempt the extremity of hunger—and stating that Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost were too much like married people. He has furnished many a text for C—— to preach upon. There was no fuss or cant about him: nor were his sweets or his sours ever diluted with one particle of affectation. I cannot say that the party at L—'s were all of one description. There were honorary members, lay-brothers. Wit and good fellowship was the motto inscribed over the door. When a stranger came in, it was not asked, "Has he written any thing?"—we were above that pedantry; but we waited to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at piquet, he was welcome to sit down. If a person liked any thing, if he took snuff heartily, it was sufficient. He would understand, by analogy, the pungency of other things, besides Irish blackguard, or Scotch rappee. A character was good

any where, in a room or on paper. But we abhorred insipidity, affectation, and fine gentlemen. There was one of our party who never failed to mark "two for his Nob" at cribbage, and he was thought no mean person. This was Ned P——, and a better fellow in his way breathes not. There was ——, who asserted some incredible matter of fact as a likely paradox, and settled all controversies by an *ipse dixit*, a *fiat* of his will, hammering out many a hard theory on the anvil of his brain—the Baron Munchausen of politics and practical philosophy:—there was Captain ———, who had you at an advantage by never understanding you:—there was Jem White, the author of Falstaff's Letters, who the other day left this dull world to go in search of more kindred spirits, "turning like the latter end of a lover's lute:" —there was A——, who sometimes dropped in, the Will Honeycomb of our set—and Mrs. R—, who being of a quiet turn, loved to hear a noisy debate. An utterly uninformed person might have supposed this a scene of vulgar confusion and uproar. While the most critical question was pending, while the most difficult problem in philosophy was solving, P——— cried out, "That's game," and M. B. muttered a quotation over the last remains of a veal-pie at a side-table.

Once, and once only, the literary interest overcame the general. For C—— was riding the high German horse, and demonstrating the Categories of the Transcendental philosophy to the author of the Road to Ruin; who insisted on his knowledge of German, and German metaphysics, having read the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the original. "My dear Mr. Holcroft," said C——, in a tone of infinitely provoking conciliation, "you really put me in mind of a sweet pretty German girl, about fifteen, that I met with in the Hartz forest in Germany—and who one day, as I was reading the Limits of the Knowable and the Unknowable, the profoundest of all his works, with great attention, came behind my chair, and leaning over, said, What, *you* read Kant? Why, *I* that am a German born, don't understand him!" This was too much to bear, and Holcroft, starting up, called out in no measured tone, "Mr. C—, you are the most eloquent man I ever met with, and the most troublesome with your eloquence!" P—— held the cribbage-peg that was to mark him game, suspended in his hand; and the whist table was silent for a moment. I saw Holcroft down stairs, and, on coming to the landing-place in Mitre-court, he stopped me to observe, that "he thought Mr. C— a very clever man,

with a great command of language, but that he feared he did not always affix very precise ideas to the words he used." After he was gone, we had our laugh out, and went on with the argument on the nature of Reason, the Imagination, and the Will. I wish I could find a publisher for it: it would make a supplement to the *Biographia Literaria* in a volume and a half octavo.

Those days are over! An event, the name of which I wish never to mention, broke up our party, like a bomb-shell thrown into the room: and now we seldom meet——

> "Like angels' visits, short and far between."

There is no longer the same set of persons, nor of associations. L— does not live where he did. By shifting his abode, his notions seem less fixed. He does not wear his old snuff-coloured coat and breeches. It looks like an alteration in his style. An author and a wit should have a separate costume, a particular cloth: he should present something positive and singular to the mind, like Mr. Douce of the Museum. Our faith in the religion of letters will not bear to be taken to pieces, and put together again by caprice or accident. L. H—— goes there sometimes. He has a fine vinous

spirit about him, and tropical blood in his veins: but he is better at his own table. He has a great flow of pleasantry and delightful animal spirits: but his hits do not tell like L—'s; you cannot repeat them the next day. He requires not only to be appreciated, but to have a select circle of admirers and devotees, to feel himself quite at home. He sits at the head of a party with great gaiety and grace; has an elegant manner and turn of features; is never at a loss—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*—has continual sportive sallies of wit or fancy; tells a story capitally; mimics an actor, or an acquaintance to admiration; laughs with great glee and good humour at his own or other people's jokes; understands the point of an equivoque, or an observation immediately; has a taste and knowledge of books, of music, of medals; manages an argument adroitly; is genteel and gallant, and has a set of bye-phrases and quaint allusions always at hand to produce a laugh:—if he has a fault, it is that he does not listen so well as he speaks, is impatient of interruption, and is fond of being looked up to, without considering by whom. I believe, however, he has pretty well seen the folly of this. Neither is his ready display of personal accomplishment and variety of resources an advantage to his writings. They

sometimes present a desultory and slip-shod appearance, owing to this very circumstance. The same things that tell, perhaps, best, to a private circle round the fireside, are not always intelligible to the public, nor does he take pains to make them so. He is too confident and secure of his audience. That which may be entertaining enough with the assistance of a certain liveliness of manner, may read very flat on paper, because it is abstracted from all the circumstances that had set it off to advantage. A writer should recollect that he has only to trust to the immediate impression of words, like a musician who sings without the accompaniment of an instrument. There is nothing to help out, or slubber over, the defects of the voice in the one case, nor of the style in the other. The reader may, if he pleases, get a very good idea of L. H—'s conversation from a very agreeable paper he has lately published, called the *Indicator*, than which nothing can be more happily conceived or executed.

The art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard. Authors in general are not good listeners. Some of the best talkers are, on this account, the worst company; and some who are very indifferent, but very great talkers, are as bad. It is sometimes wonderful to

see how a person, who has been entertaining or tiring a company by the hour together, drops his countenance as if he had been shot, or had been seized with a sudden lock-jaw, the moment any one interposes a single observation. The best converser I know is, however, the best listener. I mean Mr. Northcote, the painter. Painters by their profession are not bound to shine in conversation, and they shine the more. He lends his ear to an observation, as if you had brought him a piece of news, and enters into it with as much avidity and earnestness, as if it interested himself personally. If he repeats an old remark or story, it is with the same freshness and point as for the first time. It always arises out of the occasion, and has the stamp of originality. There is no parroting of himself. His look is a continual, ever-varying history-piece of what passes in his mind. His face is as a book. There need no marks of interjection or interrogation to what he says. His manner is quite picturesque. There is an excess of character and *naiveté* that never tires. His thoughts bubble up and sparkle, like beads on old wine. The fund of anecdote, the collection of curious particulars, is enough to set up any common retailer of jests, that dines out every day; but these are not strung together like a row of gal-

ley-slaves, but are always introduced to illustrate some argument or bring out some fine distinction of character. The mixture of spleen adds to the sharpness of the point, like poisoned arrows. Mr. Northcote enlarges with enthusiasm on the old painters, and tells good things of the new. The only thing he ever vexed me in was his liking the *Catalogue Raisonneé*. I had almost as soon hear him talk of Titian's pictures (which he does with tears in his eyes, and looking just like them) as see the originals, and I had rather hear him talk of Sir Joshua's than see them. He is the last of that school who knew Goldsmith and Johnson. How finely he describes Pope! His elegance of mind, his figure, his character were not unlike his own. He does not resemble a modern Englishman, but puts one in mind of a Roman Cardinal or Spanish Inquisitor. I never ate or drank with Mr. Northcote; but I have lived on his conversation with undiminished relish ever since I can remember,—and when I leave it, I come out into the street with feelings lighter and more etherial than I have at any other time.—One of his *téte-à-têtes* would at any time make an Essay; but he cannot write himself, because he loses himself in the connecting passages, is fearful of the effect, and wants the habit of bringing his

ideas into one focus or point of view. A *lens* is necessary to collect the diverging rays, the refracted and broken angular lights of conversation on paper. Contradiction is half the battle in talking—the being startled by what others say, and having to answer on the spot. You have to defend yourself, paragraph by paragraph, parenthesis within parenthesis. Perhaps it might be supposed that a person who excels in conversation and cannot write, would succeed better in dialogue. But the stimulus, the immediate irritation would be wanting; and the work would read flatter than ever, from not having the very thing it pretended to have.

Lively sallies and connected discourse are very different things. There are many persons of that impatient and restless turn of mind, that they cannot wait a moment for a conclusion, or follow up the thread of any argument. In the hurry of conversation their ideas are somehow huddled into sense; but in the intervals of thought, leave a great gap between. Montesquieu said, he often lost an idea before he could find words for it: yet he dictated, by way of saving time, to an amanuensis. This last is, in my opinion, a vile method, and a solecism in authorship. Horne Tooke, among other paradoxes, used to maintain, that no one could write a good

style who was not in the habit of talking and hearing the sound of his own voice. He might as well have said that no one could relish a good style without reading it aloud, as we find common people do to assist their apprehension. But there is a method of trying periods on the ear, or weighing them with the scales of the breath, without any articulate sound. Authors, as they write, may be said to "hear a sound so fine, there's nothing lives 'twixt it and silence." Even musicians generally compose in their heads. I agree that no style is good, that is not fit to be spoken or read aloud with effect. This holds true not only of emphasis and cadence, but also with regard to natural idiom and colloquial freedom. Sterne's was in this respect the best style that ever was written. You fancy that you hear the people talking. For a contrary reason, no college-man writes a good style, or understands it when written. Fine writing is with him all verbiage and monotony —a translation into classical centos or hexameter lines.

That which I have just mentioned is among many instances I could give of ingenious absurdities advanced by Mr. Tooke in the heat and pride of controversy. A person who knew him well, and greatly admired his talents, said of

him that he never (to his recollection) heard him defend an opinion which he thought right, or in which he believed him to be himself sincere. He indeed provoked his antagonists into the toils by the very extravagance of his assertions, and the teasing sophistry by which he rendered them plausible. His temper was prompter to his skill. He had the manners of a man of the world, with great scholastic resources. He flung every one else off his guard, and was himself immoveable. I never knew any one who did not admit his superiority in this kind of warfare. He put a full stop to one of C——'s long-winded prefatory apologies for his youth and inexperience, by saying abruptly, "Speak up, young man!" and, at another time, silenced a learned professor, by desiring an explanation of a word which the other frequently used, and which, he said, he had been many years trying to get at the meaning of,—the copulative Is! He was the best intellectual fencer of his day. He made strange havoc of Fuseli's fantastic hieroglyphics, violent humours, and oddity of dialect.—Curran, who was sometimes of the same party, was lively and animated in convivial conversation, but dull in argument; nay, averse to any thing like reasoning or serious observation, and had the worst taste I ever knew.

His favourite critical topics were to abuse Milton's Paradise Lost, and Romeo and Juliet. Indeed, he confessed a want of sufficient acquaintance with books when he found himself in literary society in London. He and Sheridan once dined at John Kemble's with Mrs. Inchbald and Mary Woolstonecroft, when the discourse almost wholly turned on Love, "from noon to dewy eve, a summer's day!" What a subject! What speakers, and what hearers! What would I not give to have been there, had I not learned it all from the bright eyes of Amaryllis, and may one day make a *Table-talk* of it!—Peter Pindar was rich in anecdote and grotesque humour, and profound in technical knowledge both of music, poetry, and painting, but he was gross and overbearing. Wordsworth sometimes talks like a man inspired on subjects of poetry (his own out of the question)—Coleridge well on every subject, and G—dwin on none. To finish this subject—Mrs. M——'s conversation is as fine-cut as her features, and I like to sit in the room with that sort of coronet face. What she says leaves a flavour, like fine green tea. H—t's is like champaigne, and N——'s like anchovy sandwiches. H—yd—n's is like a game at trap-ball: L—'s like snap-dragon: and my own (if I do not mistake the matter) is not very much

unlike a game at nine-pins! . . . . . One source of the conversation of authors, is the character of other authors, and on that they are rich indeed. What things they say! What stories they tell of one another, more particularly of their friends! If I durst only give some of these confidential communications!...The reader may perhaps think the foregoing a specimen of them:—but indeed he is mistaken.

I do not know of any greater impertinence, than for an obscure individual to set about pumping a character of celebrity. "Bring him to me," said a Doctor Tronchin, speaking of Rousseau, "that I may see whether he has any thing in him." Before you can take measure of the capacity of others, you ought to be sure that they have not taken measure of yours. They may think you a spy on them, and may not like their company. If you really want to know whether another person can talk well, begin by saying a good thing yourself, and you will have a right to look for a rejoinder. "The best tennis-players," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "make the best matches."

——————— For wit is like a rest
Held up at tennis, which men do the best
With the best players.

We hear it often said of a great author, or a great actress, that they are very stupid people in private. But he was a fool that said so. *Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners.* In conversation, as in other things, the action and reaction should bear a certain proportion to each other.—Authors may, in some sense, be looked upon as foreigners, who are not naturalized even in their native soil. L—— once came down into the country to see us. He was "like the most capricious poet Ovid among the Goths." The country people thought him an oddity, and did not understand his jokes. It would be strange if they had; for he did not make any, while he staid. But when we crossed the country to Oxford, then he spoke a little. He and the old colleges were hail-fellow well met; and in the quadrangles, he "walked gowned."

There is a character of a gentleman; so there is a character of a scholar, which is no less easily recognised. The one has an air of books about him, as the other has of good-breeding. The one wears his thoughts as the other does his clothes, gracefully; and even if they are a little old-fashioned, they are not ridiculous: they have had their day. The gentleman shows, by his

manner, that he has been used to respect from others: the scholar that he lays claim to self-respect and to a certain independence of opinion. The one has been accustomed to the best company; the other has passed his time in cultivating an intimacy with the best authors. There is nothing forward or vulgar in the behaviour of the one; nothing shrewd or petulant in the observations of the other, as if he should astonish the bye-standers, or was astonished himself at his own discoveries. Good taste and good sense, like common politeness, are, or are supposed to be, matters of course. One is distinguished by an appearance of marked attention to every one present; the other manifests an habitual air of abstraction and absence of mind. The one is not an upstart with all the self-important airs of the founder of his own fortune; nor the other a self-taught man, with the repulsive self-sufficiency which arises from an ignorance of what hundreds have known before him. We must excuse perhaps a little conscious family-pride in the one, and a little harmless pedantry in the other.—As there is a class of the first character which sinks into the mere gentleman, that is, which has nothing but this sense of respectability and propriety to support it—so the character of a scholar not unfre-

quently dwindles down into the shadow of a shade, till nothing is left of it but the mere book-worm. There is often something amiable as well as enviable in this last character. I know one such instance, at least. The person I mean has an admiration for learning, if he is only dazzled by its light. He lives among old authors, if he does not enter much into their spirit. He handles the covers, and turns over the page, and is familiar with the names and dates. He is busy and self-involved. He hangs like a film and cobweb upon letters, or is like the dust upon the outside of knowledge, which should not be rudely brushed aside. He follows learning as its shadow; but as such, he is respectable. He browzes on the husk and leaves of books, as the young fawn browzes on the bark and leaves of trees. Such a one lives all his life in a dream of learning, and has never once had his sleep broken by a real sense of things. He believes implicitly in genius, truth, virtue, liberty, because he finds the names of these things in books. He thinks that love and friendship are the finest things imaginable, both in practice and theory. The legend of good women is to him no fiction. When he steals from the twilight of his cell, the scene breaks upon him like an illuminated missal, and all the

people he sees are but so many figures in a *camera obscura.* He reads the world, like a favourite volume, only to find beauties in it, or like an edition of some old work which he is preparing for the press, only to make emendations in it, and correct the errors that have inadvertently slipt in. He and his dog Tray are much the same honest, simple-hearted, faithful, affectionate creatures—if Tray could but read! His mind cannot take the impression of vice: but the gentleness of his nature turns gall to milk. He would not hurt a fly. He draws the picture of mankind from the guileless simplicity of his own heart: and when he dies, his spirit will take its smiling leave, without having ever had an ill thought of others, or the consciousness of one in itself!

ESSAY V.

ON REASON AND IMAGINATION.

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I HATE people who have no notion of any thing but generalities, and forms, and creeds, and naked propositions, even worse than I dislike those who cannot for the soul of them arrive at the comprehension of an abstract idea. There are those (even among philosophers) who, deeming that all truth is contained within certain outlines and common topics, if you proceed to add colour or relief from individuality, protest against the use of rhetoric as an illogical thing; and if you drop a hint of pleasure or pain as ever entering into "this breathing world," raise a prodigious outcry against all appeals to the passions.

It is, I confess, strange to me that men who pretend to more than usual accuracy in distinguishing and analysing, should insist that in treating of human nature, of moral good and evil, the nominal differences are alone of any value, or that in describing the feelings and

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motives of men, any thing that conveys the smallest idea of what those feelings are in any given circumstances, or can by parity of reason ever be in any others, is a deliberate attempt at artifice and delusion—as if a knowledge or representation of things as they really exist (rules and definitions apart) was a proportionable departure from the truth. They stick to the table of contents, and never open the volume of the mind. They are for having maps, not pictures of the world we live in: as much as to say that a bird's-eye view of things contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you want to look for the situation of a particular spot, they turn to a pasteboard globe, on which they fix their wandering gaze; and because you cannot find the object of your search in their bald "abridgements," tell you there is no such place, or that it is not worth inquiring after. They had better confine their studies to the celestial sphere and the signs of the zodiac; for there they will meet with no petty details to boggle at, or contradict their vague conclusions. Such persons would make excellent theologians, but are very indifferent philosophers.—To pursue this geographical reasoning a little farther. They may say that the map of a county or shire, for instance,

is too large, and conveys a disproportionate idea of its relation to the whole. And we say that their map of the globe is too small, and conveys no idea of it at all.

——— "In the world's volume
Our Britain shows as of it, but not in it;
In a great pool a swan's nest:"

but is it really so? What! the county is bigger than the map at any rate: the representation falls short of the reality, by a million degrees, and you would omit it altogether in order to arrive at a balance of power in the non-entities of the understanding, and call this keeping within the bounds of sense and reason; and whatever does not come within those self-made limits is to be set aside as frivolous or monstrous. But "there are more things between heaven and earth than were ever dreamt of in this philosophy." They cannot get them all in, *of the size of life*, and therefore they reduce them on a graduated scale, till they think they can. So be it, for certain necessary and general purposes, and in compliance with the infirmity of human intellect: but at other times, let us enlarge our conceptions to the dimensions of the original objects; nor let it be pretended that we have outraged truth and nature, because we have encroached on your diminutive mechanical

standard. There is no language, no description that can strictly come up to the truth and force of reality: all we have to do is to guide our descriptions and conclusions by the reality. A certain proportion must be kept: we must not invert the rules of moral perspective. Logic should enrich and invigorate its decisions by the use of imagination; as rhetoric should be governed in its application, and guarded from abuse by the checks of the understanding. Neither, I apprehend, is sufficient alone. The mind can conceive only one or a few things in their integrity: if it proceeds to more, it must have recourse to artificial substitutes, and judge by comparison merely. In the former case, it may select the least worthy, and so distort the truth of things, by giving a hasty preference: in the latter, the danger is that it may refine and abstract so much as to attach no idea at all to them, corresponding with their practical value, or their influence on the minds of those concerned with them. Men act from individual impressions; and to know mankind, we should be acquainted with nature. Men act from passion; and we can only judge of passion by sympathy. Persons of the dry and husky class above spoken of, often seem to think even nature itself an interloper on their flimsy theories. They prefer the shadows in Plato's cave to the actual objects

without it. They consider men "as mice in an air-pump," fit only for their experiments; and do not consider the rest of the universe, or "all the mighty world of eye and ear," as worth any notice at all. This is making short, but not sure work. Truth does not lie *in vacuo*, any more than in a well. We must improve our concrete experience of persons and things into the contemplation of general rules and principles; but without being grounded in individual facts and feelings, we shall end as we began, in ignorance.

It is mentioned in a short account of the Last Moments of Mr. Fox, that the conversation at the house of Lord Holland (where he died) turning upon Mr. Burke's style, that Noble Person objected to it as too gaudy and meretricious, and said that it was more profuse of flowers than fruit. On which Mr. Fox observed, that though this was a common objection, it appeared to him altogether an unfounded one; that on the contrary, the flowers often concealed the fruit beneath them, and the ornaments of style were rather an hindrance than an advantage to the sentiments they were meant to set off. In confirmation of this remark, he offered to take down the book, and translate a page any where into his own plain, natural style; and by his doing so,

Lord Holland was convinced that he had often missed the thought from having his attention drawn off to the dazzling imagery. Thus people continually find fault with the colours of style as incompatible with the truth of the reasoning, but without any foundation whatever. If it were a question about the figure of two triangles, and any person were to object that one triangle was green and the other yellow, and bring this to bear upon the acuteness or obtuseness of the angles, it would be obvious to remark that the colour had nothing to do with the question. But in a dispute whether two objects are coloured alike, the discovery, that one is green and the other yellow, is fatal. So with respect to moral truth (as distinct from mathematical), whether a thing is good or evil, depends on the quantity of passion, of feeling, of pleasure and pain connected with it, and with which we must be made acquainted in order to come to a sound conclusion, and not on the inquiry, whether it is round or square. Passion, in short, is the essence, the chief ingredient in moral truth; and the warmth of passion is sure to kindle the light of imagination on the objects around it. The "words that glow" are almost inseparable from the "thoughts that burn." Hence logical reason and practical truth are

disparates. It is easy to raise an outcry against violent invectives, to talk loud against extravagance and enthusiasm, to pick a quarrel with every thing but the most calm, candid, and qualified statement of facts: but there are enormities to which no words can do adequate justice. Are we then, in order to form a complete idea of them, to omit every circumstance of aggravation, or to suppress every feeling of impatience that arises out of the details, lest we should be accused of giving way to the influence of prejudice and passion? This would be to falsify the impression altogether, to misconstrue reason, and fly in the face of nature. Suppose, for instance, that in the discussions on the Slave-Trade, a description to the life was given of the horrors of the *Middle Passage* (as it was termed), that you saw the manner in which thousands of wretches, year after year, were stowed together in the hold of a slave-ship, without air, without light, without food, without hope, so that what they suffered in reality was brought home to you in imagination, till you felt in sickness of heart as one of them, could it be said that this was a prejudging of the case, that your knowing the extent of the evil disqualified you from pronouncing sentence upon it, and that your disgust and abhorrence were the effects of

a heated imagination? No. Those evils that inflame the imagination and make the heart sick, ought not to leave the head cool. This is the very test and measure of the degree of the enormity, that it involuntarily staggers and appals the mind. If it were a common iniquity, if it were slight and partial, or necessary, it would not have this effect; but it very properly carries away the feelings, and (if you will) overpowers the judgment, because it is a mass of evil so monstrous and unwarranted as not to be endured, even in thought. A man on the rack does not suffer the less, because the extremity of anguish takes away his command of feeling and attention to appearances. A pang inflicted on humanity is not the less real, because it stirs up sympathy in the breast of humanity. Would you tame down the glowing language of justifiable passion into that of cold indifference, of self-complacent, sceptical reasoning, and thus take out the sting of indignation from the mind of the spectator? Not, surely, till you have removed the nuisance by the levers that strong feeling alone can set at work, and have thus taken away the pang of suffering that caused it! Or say that the question were proposed to you, whether, on some occasion, you should thrust your hand into the flames, and were coolly told that you

were not at all to consider the pain and anguish it might give you, nor suffer yourself to be led away by any such idle appeals to natural sensibility, but to refer the decision to some abstract, technical ground of propriety, would you not laugh in your adviser's face? Oh! no; where our own interests are concerned, or where we are sincere in our professions of regard, the pretended distinction between sound judgment and lively imagination is quickly done away with. But I would not wish a better or more philosophical standard of morality, than that we should think and feel towards others as we should, if it were our own case. If we look for a higher standard than this, we shall not find it; but shall lose the substance for the shadow! Again, suppose an extreme or individual instance is brought forward in any general question, as that of the cargo of sick slaves that were thrown overboard as so much *live lumber* by the captain of a Guinea vessel, in the year 1775, which was one of the things that first drew the attention of the public to this nefarious traffic*, or the practice of suspending contumacious negroes in cages to have their eyes pecked out, and to be devoured alive by birds of prey—Does this form no rule, because the mischief is solitary

* See Memoirs of Granville Sharp, by Prince Hoare, Esq.

or excessive? The rule is absolute; for we feel that nothing of the kind could take place, or be tolerated for an instant, in any system that was not rotten at the core. If such things are ever done in any circumstances with impunity, we know what must be done every day under the same sanction. It shows that there is an utter deadness to every principle of justice or feeling of humanity; and where this is the case, we may take out our tables of abstraction, and set down what is to follow through every gradation of petty, galling vexation, and wanton, unrelenting cruelty. A state of things, where a single instance of the kind can possibly happen without exciting general consternation, ought not to exist for half an hour. The parent, hydra-headed injustice ought to be crushed at once with all its viper brood. Practices, the mention of which makes the flesh creep, and that affront the light of day, ought to be put down the instant they are known, without inquiry and without repeal.

There was an example of eloquent moral reasoning connected with this subject, given in the work just referred to, which was not the less solid and profound, because it was produced by a burst of strong personal and momentary feeling. It is what follows:—"The

name of a person having been mentioned in the presence of Naimbanna (a young African chieftain), who was understood by him to have publicly asserted something very degrading to the general character of Africans, he broke out into violent and vindictive language. He was immediately reminded of the Christian duty of forgiving his enemies; upon which he answered nearly in the following words:—'If a man should rob me of my money, I can forgive him; if a man should shoot at me, or try to stab me, I can forgive him; if a man should sell me and all my family to a slave-ship, so that we should pass all the rest of our days in slavery in the West Indies, I can forgive him; but' (added he, rising from his seat with much emotion) 'if a man takes away the character of the people of my country, I never can forgive him.' Being asked why he would not extend his forgiveness to those who took away the character of the people of his country, he answered: 'If a man should try to kill me, or should sell me and my family for slaves, he would do an injury to as many as he might kill or sell; but if any one takes away the character of Black people, that man injures Black people all over the world; and when he has once taken away their character, there is nothing which he may not

do to Black people ever after. That man, for instance, will beat Black men, and say, *Oh, it is only a Black man, why should not I beat him?* That man will make slaves of Black people; for, when he has taken away their character, he will say, *Oh, they are only Black people, why should not I make them slaves?* That man will take away all the people of Africa if he can catch them; and if you ask him, But why do you take away all these people? he will say, *Oh! they are only Black people—they are not like White people—why should I not take them?* That is the reason why I cannot forgive the man who takes away the character of the people of my country.' "—MEMOIRS OF GRANVILLE SHARP, p. 369.

I conceive more real light and vital heat is thrown into the argument by this struggle of natural feeling to relieve itself from the weight of a false and injurious imputation, than would be added to it by twenty volumes of tables and calculations of the *pros* and *cons* of right and wrong, of utility and inutility, in Mr. Bentham's hand-writing. In allusion to this celebrated person's theory of morals, I will here go a step farther, and deny that the dry calculation of consequences is the sole and unqualified test of right and wrong; for we are to take into the account

(as well) the re-action of these consequences upon the mind of the individual and the community. In morals, the cultivation of a *moral sense* is not the last thing to be attended to—nay, it is the first. Almost the only unsophisticated or spirited remark that we meet with in Paley's Moral Philosophy, is one which is also to be found in Tucker's Light of Nature—namely, that in dispensing charity to common beggars we are not to consider so much the good it may do the object of it, as the harm it will do the person who refuses it. A sense of compassion is involuntarily excited by the immediate appearance of distress, and a violence and injury is done to the kindly feelings by withholding the obvious relief, the trifling pittance in our power. This is a remark, I think, worthy of the ingenious and amiable author from whom Paley borrowed it. So with respect to the atrocities committed in the Slave-Trade, it could not be set up as a doubtful plea in their favour, that the actual and intolerable sufferings inflicted on the individuals were compensated by certain advantages in a commercial and political point of view—in a moral sense they *cannot* be compensated. They hurt the public mind: they harden and sear the natural feelings.

The evil is monstrous and palpable; the pretended good is remote and contingent. In morals, as in philosophy, *De non apparentibus et non-existentibus eaden est ratio.* What does not touch the heart, or come home to the feelings, goes comparatively for little or nothing. A benefit that exists merely in possibility, and is judged of only by the forced dictates of the understanding, is not a set-off against an evil (say of equal magnitude in itself) that strikes upon the senses, that haunts the imagination, and lacerates the human heart. A spectacle of deliberate cruelty, that shocks every one that sees and hears of it, is not to be justified by any calculations of cold-blooded self-interest—is not to be permitted in any case. It is prejudged and self-condemned. Necessity has been therefore justly called "the tyrant's plea." It is no better with the mere doctrine of utility, which is the sophist's plea. Thus, for example, an infinite number of lumps of sugar put into Mr. Bentham's artificial ethical scales would never weigh against the pounds of human flesh, or drops of human blood, that are sacrificed to produce them. The taste of the former on the palate is evanescent; but the others sit heavy on the soul. The one are an

object to the imagination: the others only to the understanding. But man is an animal compounded both of imagination and understanding; and, in treating of what is good for man's nature, it is necessary to consider both. A calculation of the mere ultimate advantages, without regard to natural feelings and affections, may improve the external face and physical comforts of society, but will leave it heartless and worthless in itself. In a word, the sympathy of the individual with the consequences of his own act is to be attended to (no less than the consequences themselves) in every sound system of morality; and this must be determined by certain natural laws of the human mind, and not by rules of logic or arithmetic.

The aspect of a moral question is to be judged of very much like the face of a country, by the projecting points, by what is striking and memorable, by that which leaves traces of itself behind, or "casts its shadow before." Millions of acres do not make a picture; nor the calculation of all the consequences in the world a sentiment. We must have some outstanding object for the mind, as well as the eye, to dwell on and recur to—something marked and decisive to give a tone and texture to the

moral feelings. Not only is the attention thus roused and kept alive; but what is most important as to the principles of action, the desire of good or hatred of evil is powerfully excited. But all individual facts and history come under the head of what these people call *Imagination*. All full, true, and particular accounts they consider as romantic, ridiculous, vague, inflammatory. As a case in point, one of this school of thinkers declares that he was qualified to write a better History of India from having never been there than if he had, as the last might lead to local distinctions or party-prejudices; that is to say, that he could describe a country better at second-hand than from original observation, or that from having seen no one object, place, or person, he could do ampler justice to the whole. It might be maintained, much on the same principle, that an artist would paint a better likeness of a person after he was dead, from description or different sketches of the face, than from having seen the individual living man. On the contrary, I humbly conceive that the seeing half a dozen wandering Lascars in the streets of London gives one a better idea of the soul of India, that cradle of the world, and (as it were) garden of the sun, than all the charts, records, and statistical re-

ports that can be sent over, even under the classical administration of Mr. Canning. *Ex uno omnes.* One Hindoo differs more from a citizen of London than he does from all other Hindoos; and by seeing the two first, man to man, you know comparatively and essentially what they are, nation to nation. By a very few specimens you fix the great leading differences, which are nearly the same throughout. Any one thing is a better representative of its kind, than all the words and definitions in the world can be. The sum total is indeed different from the particulars; but it is not easy to guess at any general result, without some previous induction of particulars and appeal to experience.

"What can we reason, but from what we know?"

Again, it is quite wrong, instead of the most striking illustrations of human nature, to single out the stalest and tritest, as if they were most authentic and infallible; not considering that from the extremes you may infer the means, but you cannot from the means infer the extremes in any case. It may be said that the extreme and individual cases may be retorted upon us:—I deny it, unless it be with truth. The imagination is an *associating* principle; and

has an instinctive perception when a thing belongs to a system, or is only an exception to it. For instance, the excesses committed by the victorious besiegers of a town do not attach to the nation committing them, but to the nature of that sort of warfare, and are common to both sides. They may be struck off the score of national prejudices. The cruelties exercised upon slaves, on the other hand, grow out of the relation between master and slave; and the mind intuitively revolts at them as such. The cant about the horrors of the French Revolution is mere cant—every body knows it to be so: each party would have retaliated upon the other: it was a civil war, like that for a disputed succession: the general principle of the right or wrong of the change remained untouched. Neither would these horrors have taken place, except from Prussian manifestos, and treachery within: there were none in the American, and have been none in the Spanish Revolution. The massacre of St. Bartholomew arose out of the principles of that religion which exterminates with fire and sword, and keeps no faith with heretics.—If it be said that nick-names, party watch-words, bugbears, the cry of "No Popery," &c. are continually played off upon the imagination with the most mischievous

effect, I answer that most of these bugbears and terms of vulgar abuse have arisen out of abstruse speculation or barbarous prejudice, and have seldom had their root in real facts or natural feelings. Besides, are not general topics, rules, exceptions, endlessly bandied to and fro, and balanced one against the other by the most learned disputants? Have not three-fourths of all the wars, schisms, heart-burnings in the world begun on mere points of controversy?—There are two classes whom I have found given to this kind of reasoning against the use of our senses and feelings in what concerns human nature, *viz.* knaves and fools. The last do it, because they think their own shallow dogmas settle all questions best without any farther appeal; and the first do it, because they know that the refinements of the head are more easily got rid of than the suggestions of the heart, and that a strong sense of injustice, excited by a particular case in all its aggravations, tells more against them than all the distinctions of the jurists. Facts, concrete existences, are stubborn things, and are not so soon tampered with or turned about to any point we please, as mere names and abstractions. Of these last it may be said,

"A breath can *mar* them, as a breath has made:"

and they are liable to be puffed away by every wind of doctrine, or baffled by every plea of convenience. I wonder that Rousseau gave into this cant about the want of soundness in rhetorical and imaginative reasoning; and was so fond of this subject, as to make an abridgment of Plato's rhapsodies upon it, by which he was led to expel poets from his commonwealth. Thus two of the most flowery writers are those who have exacted the greatest severity of style from others. Rousseau was too ambitious of an exceedingly technical and scientific mode of reasoning, scarcely attainable in the mixed questions of human life, (as may be seen in his SOCIAL CONTRACT—a work of great ability, but extreme formality of structure) and it is probable he was led into this error in seeking to overcome his too great warmth of natural temperament and a tendency to indulge merely the impulses of passion. Burke, who was a man of fine imagination, had the good sense (without any of this false modesty) to defend the moral uses of the imagination, and is himself one of the grossest instances of its abuse.

It is not merely the fashion among philosophers—the poets also have got into a way of scouting individuality as beneath the sublimity of their pretensions, and the universality of

their genius. The philosophers have become mere logicians, and their rivals mere rhetoricians; for as these last must float on the surface, and are not allowed to be harsh and crabbed and recondite like the others, by leaving out the individual, they become common-place. They cannot reason, and they must declaim. Modern tragedy, in particular, is no longer like a vessel making the voyage of life, and tossed about by the winds and waves of passion, but is converted into a handsomely-constructed steam-boat, that is moved by the sole expansive power of words. Lord Byron has launched several of these ventures lately (if ventures they may be called) and may continue in the same strain as long as he pleases. We have not now a number of *dramatis personæ* affected by particular incidents and speaking according to their feelings, or as the occasion suggests, but each mounting the rostrum, and delivering his opinion on fate, fortune, and the entire consummation of things. The individual is not of sufficient importance to occupy his own thoughts or the thoughts of others. The poet fills his page with *grandes pensées*. He covers the face of nature with the beauty of his sentiments and the brilliancy of his paradoxes. We have the subtleties of the head, instead of the workings

of the heart, and possible justifications instead of the actual motives of conduct. This all seems to proceed on a false estimate of individual nature and the value of human life. We have been so used to count by millions of late, that we think the units that compose them nothing; and are so prone to trace remote principles, that we neglect the immediate results. As an instance of the opposite style of dramatic dialogue, in which the persons speak for themselves, and to one another, I will give, by way of illustration, a passage from an old tragedy, in which a brother has just caused his sister to be put to a violent death.

"*Bosola.* Fix your eye here.
Ferdinand. Constantly.
Bosola. Do you not weep?
Other sins only speak; murther shrieks out:
The element of water moistens the earth;
But blood flies upwards, and bedews the heavens.
Ferdinand. Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle; she died young.
Bosola. I think not so: her infelicity
Seem'd to have years too many.
Ferdinand. She and I were twins:
And should I die this instant, I had lived
Her time to a minute."

DUCHESS OF MALFY, Act IV. Scene 2.

How fine is the constancy with which he first fixes his eye on the dead body, with a forced

courage, and then, as his resolution wavers, how natural is his turning his face away, and the reflection that strikes him on her youth and beauty and untimely death, and the thought that they were twins, and his measuring his life by hers up to the present period, as if all that was to come of it were nothing! Now, I would fain ask whether there is not in this contemplation of the interval that separates the beginning from the end of life, of a life too so varied from good to ill, and of the pitiable termination of which the person speaking has been the wilful and guilty cause, enough to "give the mind pause?" Is not that revelation as it were of the whole extent of our being which is made by the flashes of passion and stroke of calamity, a subject sufficiently staggering to have place in legitimate tragedy? Are not the struggles of the will with untoward events and the adverse passions of others as interesting and instructive in the representation as reflections on the mutability of fortune or inevitableness of destiny, or on the passions of men in general? The tragic Muse does not merely utter muffled sounds: but we see the paleness on the cheek, and the life-blood gushing from the heart! The interest we take in our own lives, in our successes or disappointments, and the *home* feelings that arise out of

these, when well described, are the clearest and truest mirror in which we can see the image of human nature. For in this sense each man is a microcosm. What he is, the rest are—whatever his joys and sorrows are composed of, theirs are the same—no more, no less.

> "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

But it must be the genuine touch of nature, not the outward flourishes and varnish of art. The spouting, oracular, didactic figure of the poet no more answers to the living man, than the lay-figure of the painter does. We may well say to such a one,

> "Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
> That thou dost glare with: thy bones are marrowless,
> Thy blood is cold!"

Man is (so to speak) an endless and infinitely varied repetition: and if we know what one man feels, we so far know what a thousand feel in the sanctuary of their being. Our feeling of general humanity is at once an aggregate of a thousand different truths, and it is also the same truth a thousand times told. As is our perception of this original truth, the root of our

imagination, so will the force and richness of the general impression proceeding from it be. The boundary of our sympathy is a circle which enlarges itself according to its propulsion from the centre—the heart. If we are imbued with a deep sense of individual weal or woe, we shall be awe-struck at the idea of humanity in general. If we know little of it but its abstract and common properties, without their particular application, their force or degrees, we shall care just as little as we know either about the whole or the individuals. If we understand the texture and vital feeling, we then can fill up the outline, but we cannot supply the former from having the latter given. Moral and poetical truth is like expression in a picture—the one is not to be attained by smearing over a large canvas, nor the other by bestriding a vague topic. In such matters, the most pompous sciolists are accordingly found to be the greatest contemners of human life. But I defy any great tragic writer to despise that nature which he understands, or that heart which he has probed, with all its rich bleeding materials of joy and sorrow. The subject may not be a source of much triumph to him, from its alternate light and shade, but it can never become one of supercilious indifference. He must feel a

strong reflex interest in it, corresponding to that which he has depicted in the characters of others. Indeed, the object and end of playing, "both at the first and now, is to hold the mirror up to nature," to enable us to feel for others as for ourselves, or to embody a distinct interest out of ourselves by the force of imagination and passion. This is summed up in the wish of the poet—

> "To feel what others are, and know myself a man."

If it does not do this, it loses both its dignity and its proper use.

ESSAY VI.

ON APPLICATION TO STUDY.

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No one is idle, who can do any thing. It is conscious inability, or the sense of repeated failure, that prevents us from undertaking, or deters us from the prosecution of any work.

Wilson, the painter, might be mentioned as an exception to this rule; for he was said to be an indolent man. After bestowing a few touches on a picture, he grew tired, and said to any friend who called in, "Now, let us go somewhere!" But the fact is, that Wilson could not finish his pictures minutely; and that those few masterly touches, carelessly thrown in of a morning, were all that he could do. The rest would have been labour lost. Morland has been referred to as another man of genius, who could only be brought to work by fits and snatches. But his landscapes and figures (whatever degree of merit they might possess) were mere hasty sketches; and he could produce all that he was capable of, in the first half-hour, as well as in

twenty years. Why bestow additional pains without additional effect? What he did was from the impulse of the moment, from the lively impression of some coarse, but striking object; and with that impulse his efforts ceased, as they justly ought. There is no use in labouring, *invitâ Minerva*—nor any difficulty in it, when the Muse is not averse.

"The labour we delight in physics pain."

Denner finished his unmeaning portraits with a microscope, and without being ever weary of his fruitless task; for the essence of his genius was industry. Sir Joshua Reynolds, courted by the Graces and by Fortune, was hardly ever out of his painting-room; and lamented a few days, at any time spent at a friend's house or at a nobleman's seat in the country, as so much time lost. That darkly-illuminated room "to him a kingdom was:" his pencil was the sceptre that he wielded, and the throne, on which his sitters were placed, a throne for Fame. Here he felt indeed at home; here the current of his ideas flowed full and strong; here he felt most self-possession, most command over others; and the sense of power urged him on to his delightful task with a sort of vernal cheerfulness and vigour, even in the decline of life. The feeling

of weakness and incapacity would have made his hand soon falter, would have rebutted him from his object; or had the canvas mocked, and been insensible to his toil, instead of gradually turning to

> "A lucid mirror, in which nature saw
> All her reflected features,"

he would, like so many others, have thrown down his pencil in despair, or proceeded reluctantly, without spirit and without success. Claude Lorraine, in like manner, spent whole mornings on the banks of the Tiber or in his study, eliciting beauty after beauty, adding touch to touch, getting nearer and nearer to perfection, luxuriating in endless felicity—not merely giving the salient points, but filling up the whole intermediate space with continuous grace and beauty! What farther motive was necessary to induce him to persevere, but the bounty of his fate? What greater pleasure could he seek for, than that of seeing the perfect image of his mind reflected in the work of his hand? But as is the pleasure and the confidence produced by consummate skill, so is the pain and the desponding effect of total failure. When for the fair face of nature, we only see an unsightly blot issuing from our best endeavours,

then the nerves slacken, the tears fill the eyes, and the painter turns away from his art, as the lover from a mistress, that scorns him. Alas! how many such have, as the poet says,

"Begun in gladness;
Whereof has come in the end despondency and madness"—

not for want of will to proceed, (oh! no,) but for lack of power!

Hence it is that those often do best (up to a certain point of common-place success) who have least knowledge and least ambition to excel. Their taste keeps pace with their capacity; and they are not deterred by insurmountable difficulties, of which they have no idea. I have known artists (for instance) of considerable merit, and a certain native rough strength and resolution of mind, who have been active and enterprising in their profession, but who never seemed to think of any works but those which they had in hand; they never spoke of a picture, or appeared to have seen one: to them Titian, Raphael, Rubens, Rembrandt, Correggio, were as if they had never been: no tones, mellowed by time to soft perfection, lured them to their luckless doom, no divine forms baffled their vain embrace; no sound of immortality rung in their ears, or drew off their attention from the calls of

creditors or of hunger: they walked through collections of the finest works, like the Children in the Fiery Furnace, untouched, unapproached. With these true *terræ filii* the art seemed to begin and end: they thought only of the subject of their next production, the size of their next canvas, the grouping, the getting of the figures in; and conducted their work to its conclusion with as little distraction of mind and as few misgivings as a stage-coachman conducts a stage, or a carrier delivers a bale of goods, according to its destination. Such persons, if they do not rise above, at least seldom sink below themselves. They do not soar to the "highest Heaven of invention," nor penetrate the inmost recesses of the heart; but they succeed in all that they attempt, or are capable of, as men of business and industry in their calling. For them the veil of the Temple of Art is not rent asunder, and it is well: one glimpse of the Sanctuary, of the Holy of the Holies, might palsy their hands, and dim their sight for ever after!

I think there are two mistakes, common enough, on this subject; viz. that men of genius, or of first-rate capacity, do little, except by intermittent fits, or *per saltum*—and that they do that little in a slight and slovenly manner.

There may be instances of this; but they are not the highest, and they are the exceptions, not the rule. On the contrary, the greatest artists have in general been the most prolific or the most elaborate, as the best writers have been frequently the most voluminous as well as indefatigable. We have a great living instance among writers, that the quality of a man's productions is not to be estimated in the inverse ratio of their quantity, I mean in the Author of Waverley; the fecundity of whose pen is no less admirable than its felicity. Shakespear is another instance of the same prodigality of genius; his materials being endlessly poured forth with no niggard or fastidious hand, and the mastery of the execution being (in many respects at least) equal to the boldness of the design. As one example among others that I might cite of the attention which he gave to his subject, it is sufficient to observe, that there is scarcely a word in any of his more striking passages that can be altered for the better. If any person, for instance, is trying to recollect a favourite line, and cannot hit upon some particular expression, it is in vain to think of substituting any other so good. That in the original text is not merely the best, but it seems the only right

one. I will stop to illustrate this point a little. I was at a loss the other day for the line in Henry V.

"*Nice* customs curtesy to great kings."

I could not recollect the word *nice:* I tried a number of others, such as *old, grave,* &c.—they would none of them do, but seemed all heavy, lumbering, or from the purpose: the word *nice,* on the contrary, appeared to drop into its place, and be ready to assist in paying the reverence required. Again,

"A jest's *prosperity* lies in the ear
Of him that hears it."

I thought, in quoting from memory, of "A jest's *success,*" "A jest's *renown,*" &c. I then turned to the volume, and there found the very word that, of all others, expressed the idea. Had Shakespear searched through the four quarters of the globe, he could not have lighted on another to convey so exactly what he meant—a *casual, hollow, sounding* success! I could multiply such examples, but that I am sure the reader will easily supply them himself; and they shew sufficiently that Shakespear was not (as he is often represented) a loose or clumsy writer. The bold, happy texture of his style, in which

every word is prominent, and yet cannot be torn from its place without violence, any more than a limb from the body, is (one should think) the result either of vigilant pains-taking or of unerring, intuitive perception, and not the mark of crude conceptions, and "the random, blindfold blows of Ignorance."

There cannot be a greater contradiction to the common prejudice that "Genius is naturally a truant and a vagabond," than the astonishing and (on this hypothesis) unaccountable number of *chef-d'œuvres* left behind them by the old masters. The stream of their invention supplies the taste of successive generations like a river: they furnish a hundred Galleries, and preclude competition, not more by the excellence than by the number of their performances. Take Raphael and Rubens alone. There are works of theirs in single Collections enough to occupy a long and laborious life, and yet their works are spread through all the Collections of Europe. They seem to have cost them no more labour than if they "had drawn in their breath and puffed it forth again." But we know that they made drawings, studies, sketches of all the principal of these, with the care and caution of the merest tyros in the art; and they remain equal proofs of their capacity and diligence. The

Cartoons of Raphael alone might have employed many years, and made a life of illustrious labour, though they look as if they had been struck off at a blow, and are not a tenth part of what he produced in his short but bright career. Titian and Michael Angelo lived longer, but they worked as hard and did as well. Shall we bring in competition with examples like these some trashy caricaturist or idle dauber, who has no sense of the infinite resources of nature or art, nor consequently any power to employ himself upon them for any length of time or to any purpose, to prove that genius and regular industry are incompatible qualities?

In my opinion, the very superiority of the works of the great painters (instead of being a bar to) accounts for their multiplicity. Power is pleasure; and pleasure sweetens pain. A fine poet thus describes the effect of the sight of nature on his mind:

——— "The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms were then to me
An appetite, a feeling, and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye."

So the forms of nature, or the human form divine,

stood before the great artists of old, nor required any other stimulus to lead the eye to survey, or the hand to embody them, than the pleasure derived from the inspiration of the subject, and "propulsive force" of the mimic creation. The grandeur of their works was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generation of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion; and habit facilitates success. It is idle to suppose we can exhaust nature; and the more we employ our own faculties, the more we strengthen them and enrich our stores of observation and invention. The more we do, the more we *can* do. Not indeed if we *get our ideas out of our own heads*—that stock is soon exhausted, and we recur to tiresome, vapid imitations of ourselves. But this is the difference between real and mock talent, between genius and affectation. Nature is not limited, not does it become effete, like our conceit and vanity. The closer we examine it, the more it refines upon us; it expands as we enlarge and shift our view; it "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength." The subjects are endless; and our capacity is invigorated as it is called out by occasion and necessity. He who does nothing, renders himself incapable of

doing any thing; but while we are executing any work, we are preparing and qualifying ourselves to undertake another. The principles are the same in all nature; and we understand them better, as we verify them by experience and practice. It is not as if there was a given number of subjects to work upon, or a set of *innate* or preconceived ideas in our minds which we encroached upon with every new design; the subjects, as I said before, are endless, and we acquire ideas by imparting them. Our expenditure of intellectual wealth makes us rich; we can only be liberal as we have previously accumulated the means. By lying idle, as by standing still, we are confined to the same trite, narrow round of topics: by continuing our efforts, as by moving forwards in a road, we extend our views, and discover continually new tracts of country. Genius, like humanity, rusts for want of use.

Habit also gives promptness; and the soul of dispatch is decision. One man may write a book or paint a picture, while another is deliberating about the plan or the title-page. The great painters were able to do so much, because they knew exactly what they meant to do, and how to set about it. They were thorough-bred workmen, and were not learning their art while

they were exercising it. One can do a great deal in a short time if one only knows how. Thus an author may become very voluminous, who only employs an hour or two in a day in study. If he has once obtained, by habit and reflection, a use of his pen with plenty of materials to work upon, the pages vanish before him. The time lost is in beginning, or in stopping after we have begun. If we only go forwards with spirit and confidence, we shall soon arrive at the end of our journey. A practised writer ought never to hesitate for a sentence from the moment he sets pen to paper, or think about the course he is to take. He must trust to his previous knowledge of the subject and to his immediate impulses, and he will get to the close of his task without accidents or loss of time. I can easily understand how the old divines and controversialists produced their folios: I could write folios myself, if I rose early and sat up late at this kind of occupation. But I confess I should be soon tired of it, besides wearying the reader.

In one sense, art is long and life is short. In another sense, this aphorism is not true. The best of us are idle half our time. It is wonderful how much is done in a short space, provided we set about it properly, and give our minds wholly

to it. Let any one devote himself to any art or science ever so strenuously, and he will still have leisure to make considerable progress in half a dozen other acquirements. Leonardo da Vinci was a mathematician, a musician, a poet, and an anatomist, besides being one of the greatest painters of his age. The Prince of Painters was a courtier, a lover, and fond of dress and company. Michael Angelo was a prodigy of versatility of talent—a writer of Sonnets (which Wordsworth has thought worth translating) and the friend of Dante. Salvator was a lutenist and a satirist. Titian was an elegant letter-writer, and a finished gentleman. Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses are more polished and classical even than any of his pictures. Let a man do all he can in any one branch of study, he must either exhaust himself and doze over it, or vary his pursuit, or else lie idle. All our real labour lies in a nut-shell. The mind makes, at some period or other, one Herculean effort, and the rest is mechanical. We have to climb a steep and narrow precipice at first; but after that, the way is broad and easy, where we may drive several accomplishments abreast. Men should have one principal pursuit, which may be both agreeably and advantageously diversified with other lighter ones,

as the subordinate parts of a picture may be managed so as to give effect to the centre group. It has been observed by a sensible man*, that the having a regular occupation or professional duties to attend to is no excuse for putting forth an inelegant or inaccurate work; for a habit of industry braces and strengthens the mind, and enables it to wield its energies with additional ease and steadier purpose.—Were I allowed to instance in myself, if what I write at present is worth nothing, at least it costs me nothing. But it cost me a great deal twenty years ago. I have added little to my stock since then, and taken little from it. I "unfold the book and volume of the brain," and transcribe the characters I see there as mechanically as any one might copy the letters in a sampler. I do not say they came there mechanically—I transfer them to the paper mechanically. After eight or ten years' hard study, an author (at least) may go to sleep.

I do not conceive rapidity of execution necessarily implies slovenliness or crudeness. On the contrary, I believe it is often productive both of sharpness and freedom. The eagerness of composition strikes out sparkles of fancy, and runs the thoughts more naturally

* The Rev. W. Shepherd, of Gateacre, in the Preface to his Life of Poggio.

and closely into one another. There may be less formal method, but there is more life, and spirit, and truth. In the play and agitation of the mind, it runs over, and we dally with the subject, as the glass-blower rapidly shapes the vitreous fluid. A number of new thoughts rise up spontaneously, and they come in the proper places, because they arise from the occasion. They are also sure to partake of the warmth and vividness of that ebullition of mind, from which they spring. *Spiritus precipitandus est.* In these sort of voluntaries in composition, the thoughts are worked up to a state of projection: the grasp of the subject, the presence of mind, the flow of expression must be something akin to *extempore* speaking; or perhaps such bold but finished draughts may be compared to *fresco* paintings, which imply a life of study and great previous preparation, but of which the execution is momentary and irrevocable. I will add a single remark on a point that has been much disputed. Mr. Cobbett lays it down that the first word that occurs is always the best. I would venture to differ from so great an authority. Mr. Cobbett himself indeed writes as easily and as well as he talks; but he perhaps is hardly a rule for others without his practice and without his ability. In the hurry of composition

three or four words may present themselves, one on the back of the other, and the last may be the best and right one. I grant thus much, that it is in vain to seek for the word we want, or endeavour to get at it second-hand, or as a paraphrase on some other word—it must come of itself, or arise out of an immediate impression or lively intuition of the subject; that is, the proper word must be suggested immediately by the thoughts, but it need not be presented as soon as called for. It is the same in trying to recollect the names of places, persons, &c. We cannot force our memory; they must come of themselves by natural association, as it were; but they may occur to us when we least think of it, owing to some casual circumstance or link of connexion, and long after we have given up the search. Proper expressions rise to the surface from the heat and fermentation of the mind, like bubbles on an agitated stream. It is this which produces a clear and sparkling style.

In painting, great execution supplies the place of high finishing. A few vigorous touches, properly and rapidly disposed, will often give more of the appearance and texture (even) of natural objects than the most heavy and laborious details. But this masterly style of execution is very different from coarse daubing. I do not

think, however, that the pains or polish an artist bestows upon his works necessarily interferes with their number. He only grows more enamoured of his task, proportionally patient, indefatigable, and devotes more of the day to study. The time we lose is not in overdoing what we are about, but in doing nothing. Rubens had great facility of execution, and seldom went into the details. Yet Raphael, whose oil-pictures were exact and laboured, atchieved, according to the length of time he lived, very nearly as much as he. In filling up the parts of his pictures, and giving them the last perfection they were capable of, he filled up his leisure hours, which otherwise would have lain idle on his hands. I have sometimes accounted for the slow progress of certain artists from the unfinished state in which they have left their works at last. These were evidently done by fits and throes—there was no appearance of continuous labour—one figure had been thrown in at a venture, and then another; and in the intervals between these convulsive and random efforts, more time had been wasted than could have been spent in working up each individual figure on the sure principles of art, and by a careful inspection of nature, to the utmost point of practicable perfection.

Some persons are afraid of their own works; and having made one or two successful efforts, attempt nothing ever after. They stand still midway in the road to fame, from being startled at the shadow of their own reputation. This is a needless alarm. If what they have already done possesses real power, this will increase with exercise; if it has not this power, it is not sufficient to ensure them lasting fame. Such delicate pretenders tremble on the brink of *ideal* perfection, like dew-drops on the edge of flowers; and are fascinated, like so many Narcissuses, with the image of themselves, reflected from the public admiration. It is seldom, indeed, that this cautious repose will answer its end. While seeking to sustain our reputation at the height, we are forgotten. Shakespear gave different advice, and himself acted upon it.

—— "Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright. To have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail,
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way;
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where one but goes abreast. Keep then the path;
For emulation hath a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue. If you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forth-right,
Like to an enter'd tide, they all rush by,

And leave you hindmost:—
Or like a gallant horse, fall'n in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'er-run and trampled. Then what they do in present,
Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours:
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,
And with his arms outstretch'd as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer. Welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing. O let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was; for beauty, wit,
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time.
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,
That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past;
And give to dust that is a little gilt
More laud than gilt o'er dusted.
The present eye praises the present object."

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

I cannot very well conceive how it is that some writers (even of taste and genius) spend whole years in mere corrections for the press, as it were —in polishing a line or adjusting a comma. They take long to consider, exactly as there is nothing worth the trouble of a moment's thought; and the more they deliberate, the farther they are from deciding: for their fastidiousness increases with the indulgence of it, nor is there any real

ground for preference. They are in the situation of *Ned Softly*, in the TATLER, who was a whole morning debating whether a line of a poetical epistle should run—

"You sing your song with so much art;"

or,

"Your song you sing with so much art."

These are points that it is impossible ever to come to a determination about; and it is only a proof of a little mind ever to have entertained the question at all.

There is a class of persons whose minds seem to move in an element of littleness; or rather, that are entangled in trifling difficulties, and incapable of extricating themselves from them. There was a remarkable instance of this improgressive, ineffectual, restless activity of temper in a late celebrated and very ingenious landscape-painter. "Never ending, still beginning," his mind seemed entirely made up of points and fractions, nor could he by any means arrive at a conclusion or a valuable whole. He made it his boast that he never sat with his hands before him, and yet he never did any thing. His powers and his time were frittered away in an importunate, uneasy, fidgetty attention to

little things. The first picture he ever painted (when a mere boy) was a copy of his father's house; and he began it by counting the number of bricks in the front upwards and lengthways, and then made a scale of them on his canvas. This literal style and mode of study stuck to him to the last. He was put under Wilson, whose example (if any thing could) might have cured him of this pettiness of conception; but nature prevailed, as it almost always does. To take pains to no purpose, seemed to be his motto, and the delight of his life. He left (when he died, not long ago) heaps of canvasses with elaborately finished pencil outlines on them, and with perhaps a little dead-colouring added here and there. In this state they were thrown aside, as if he grew tired of his occupation the instant it gave a promise of turning to account, and his whole object in the pursuit of art was to erect scaffoldings. The same intense interest in the most frivolous things extended to the common concerns of life, to the arranging of his letters, the labelling of his books, and the inventory of his wardrobe. Yet he was a man of sense, who saw the folly and the waste of time in all this, and could warn others against it. The perceiving our own weaknesses enables us to give others excellent advice, but it does not

teach us to reform them ourselves. "Physician, heal thyself!" is the hardest lesson to follow. Nobody knew better than our artist that repose is necessary to great efforts, and that he who is never idle, labours in vain!

Another error is to spend one's life in procrastination and preparations for the future. Persons of this turn of mind stop at the threshold of art, and accumulate the means of improvement, till they obstruct their progress to the end. They are always putting off the evil day, and excuse themselves for doing nothing by commencing some new and indispensable course of study. Their projects are magnificent, but remote, and require years to complete or to put them in execution. Fame is seen in the horizon, and flies before them. Like the recreant boastful knight in Spenser, they turn their backs on their competitors, to make a great career, but never return to the charge. They make themselves masters of anatomy, of drawing, of perspective: they collect prints, casts, medallions, make studies of heads, of hands, of the bones, the muscles; copy pictures; visit Italy, Greece, and return as they went. They fulfil the proverb, "When you are at Rome, you must do as those at Rome do." This circuitous, erratic pursuit of art can come to no good. It is only

an apology for idleness and vanity. Foreign travel especially makes men pedants, not artists. What we seek, we must find at home or nowhere. The way to do great things is to set about something, and he who cannot find resources in himself or in his own painting-room, will perform the grand tour, or go through the circle of the arts and sciences, and end just where he began!

The same remarks that have been here urged with respect to an application to the study of art, will, in a great measure, (though not in every particular) apply to an attention to business: I mean, that exertion will generally follow success and opportunity in the one, as it does confidence and talent in the other. Give a man a motive to work, and he will work. A lawyer who is regularly feed, seldom neglects to look over his briefs: the more business, the more industry. The stress laid upon early rising is preposterous. If we have any thing to do when we get up, we shall not lie in bed, to a certainty. Thomson the poet was found late in bed by Dr. Burney, and asked why he had not risen earlier. The Scotchman wisely answered, "I had no motive, young man!" What indeed had he to do after writing the SEASONS, but to dream out the rest of

his existence, unless it were to write the CASTLE OF INDOLENCE*!

* School-boys attend to their tasks as soon as they acquire a relish for study, and apply to that for which they find they have a capacity. If a boy shows no inclination for the Latin tongue, it is a sign he has not a turn for learning languages. Yet he dances well. Give up the thought of making a scholar of him, and bring him up to be a dancing-master!

ESSAY VII.

ON LONDONERS AND COUNTRY PEOPLE.

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I DO not agree with Mr. *Blackwood* in his definition of the word *Cockney*. He means by it a person who has happened at any time to live in London, and who is not a Tory—I mean by it a person who has never lived out of London, and who has got all his ideas from it.

The true Cockney has never travelled beyond the purlieus of the Metropolis, either in the body or the spirit. Primrose-hill is the Ultima Thule of his most romantic desires; Greenwich Park stands him in stead of the Vales of Arcady. Time and space are lost to him. He is confined to one spot, and to the present moment. He sees every thing near, superficial, little, in hasty succession. The world turns round, and his head with it, like a roundabout at a fair, till he becomes stunned and giddy with the motion. Figures glide by as in a *camera obscura*. There is a glare, a perpetual hubbub, a noise, a crowd about him; he sees and hears

a vast number of things, and knows nothing. He is pert, raw, ignorant, conceited, ridiculous, shallow, contemptible. His senses keep him alive; and he knows, inquires, and cares for nothing farther. He meets the Lord Mayor's coach, and without ceremony treats himself to an imaginary ride in it. He notices the people going to court or to a city-feast, and is quite satisfied with the show. He takes the wall of a Lord, and fancies himself as good as he. He sees an infinite quantity of people pass along the street, and thinks there is no such thing as life or a knowledge of character to be found out of London. "Beyond Hyde Park all is a desart to him." He despises the country, because he is ignorant of it, and the town, because he is familiar with it. He is as well acquainted with St. Paul's as if he had built it, and talks of Westminster Abbey and Poets' Corner with great indifference. The King, the House of Lords and Commons are his very good friends. He knows the members for Westminster or the City by sight, and bows to the Sheriffs or the Sheriffs' men. He is hand and glove with the Chairman of some Committee. He is, in short, a great man by proxy, and comes so often in contact with fine persons and things, that he rubs off a little of the gilding, and is surcharged

with a sort of second-hand, vapid, tingling, troublesome self-importance. His personal vanity is thus continually flattered and perked up into ridiculous self-complacency, while his imagination is jaded and impaired by daily misuse. Every thing is vulgarised in his mind. Nothing dwells long enough on it to produce an interest; nothing is contemplated sufficiently at a distance to excite curiosity or wonder. *Your true Cockney is your only true leveller.* Let him be as low as he will, he fancies he is as good as any body else. He has no respect for himself, and still less (if possible) for you. He cares little about his own advantages, if he can only make a jest at yours. Every feeling comes to him through a medium of levity and impertinence; nor does he like to have this habit of mind disturbed by being brought into collision with any thing serious or respectable. He despairs (in such a crowd of competitors) of distinguishing himself, but laughs heartily at the idea of being able to trip up the heels of other people's pretensions. A Cockney feels no gratitude. This is a first principle with him. He regards any obligation you confer upon him as a species of imposition, a ludicrous assumption of fancied superiority. He talks about every thing, for he has heard something about it; and understanding nothing

of the matter, concludes he has as good a right as you. He is a politician; for he has seen the Parliament House: he is a critic; because he knows the principal actors by sight—has a taste for music, because he belongs to a glee-club at the West End, and is gallant, in virtue of sometimes frequenting the lobbies at half-price. A mere Londoner, in fact, from the opportunities he has of knowing something of a number of objects (and those striking ones) fancies himself a sort of privileged person; remains satisfied with the assumption of merits, so much the more unquestionable as they are not his own; and from being dazzled with noise, show, and appearances, is less capable of giving a real opinion, or entering into any subject than the meanest peasant. There are greater lawyers, orators, painters, philosophers, poets, players in London, than in any other part of the United Kingdom: he is a Londoner, and therefore it would be strange if he did not know more of law, eloquence, art, philosophy, poetry, acting, than any one without his local advantages, and who is merely from the country. This is a *non sequitur;* and it constantly appears so when put to the test.

A real Cockney is the poorest creature in the world, the most literal, the most mechanical,

and yet he too lives in a world of romance—a fairy-land of his own. He is a citizen of London; and this abstraction leads his imagination the finest dance in the world. London is the first city on the habitable globe; and therefore he must be superior to every one who lives out of it. There are more people in London than any where else; and though a dwarf in stature, his person swells out and expands into *ideal* importance and borrowed magnitude. He resides in a garret or in a two pair of stairs' back room; yet he talks of the magnificence of London, and gives himself airs of consequence upon it, as if all the houses in Portman or in Grosvenor Square were his by right or in reversion. "He is owner of all he surveys." The Monument, the Tower of London, St. James's Palace, the Mansion House, White-Hall, are part and parcel of his being. Let us suppose him to be a lawyer's clerk at half-a-guinea a week: but he knows the Inns of Court, the Temple Gardens, and Gray's-Inn Passage, sees the lawyers in their wigs walking up and down Chancery Lane, and has advanced within half-a-dozen yards of the Chancellor's chair:—who can doubt that he understands (by implication) every point of law (however intricate) better than the most expert country practitioner? He is a shopman,

and nailed all day behind the counter: but he sees hundreds and thousands of gay, well-dressed people pass—an endless phantasmagoria—and enjoys their liberty and gaudy fluttering pride. He is a footman—but he rides behind beauty, through a crowd of carriages, and visits a thousand shops. Is he a tailor—that last infirmity of human nature? The stigma on his profession is lost in the elegance of the patterns he provides, and of the persons he adorns; and he is something very different from a mere country botcher. Nay, the very scavenger and nightman thinks the dirt in the street has something precious in it, and his employment is solemn, silent, sacred, peculiar to London! A *barker* in Monmouth Street, a slop-seller in Radcliffe Highway, a tapster at a night-cellar, a beggar in St. Giles's, a drab in Fleet-Ditch, live in the eyes of millions, and eke out a dreary, wretched, scanty, or loathsome existence from the gorgeous, busy, glowing scene around them. It is a common saying among such persons that "they had rather be hanged in London than die a natural death out of it any where else"—Such is the force of habit and imagination. Even the eye of childhood is dazzled and delighted with the polished splendour of the jewellers' shops, the neatness of the turnery ware, the

festoons of artificial flowers, the confectionery, the chemists' shops, the lamps, the horses, the carriages, the sedan-chairs: to this was formerly added a set of traditional associations —Whittington and his Cat, Guy Faux and the Gunpowder Treason, the Fire and the Plague of London, and the Heads of the Scotch Rebels that were stuck on Temple Bar in 1745. These have vanished, and in their stead the curious and romantic eye must be content to pore in Pennant for the scite of old London-Wall, or to peruse the sentimental mile-stone that marks the distance to the place "where Hickes's Hall formerly stood!"

The *Cockney* lives in a go-cart of local prejudices and positive illusions; and when he is turned out of it, he hardly knows how to stand or move. He ventures through Hyde Park Corner, as a cat crosses a gutter. The trees pass by the coach very oddly. The country has a strange blank appearance. It is not lined with houses all the way, like London. He comes to places he never saw or heard of. He finds the world is bigger than he thought for. He might have dropped from the moon, for any thing he knows of the matter. He is mightily disposed to laugh, but is half afraid of making some blunder. Between sheepishness and conceit, he is in a very

ludicrous situation. He finds that the people walk on two legs, and wonders to hear them talk a dialect so different from his own. He perceives London fashions have got down into the country before him, and that some of the better sort are dressed as well as he is. A drove of pigs or cattle stopping the road is a very troublesome interruption. A crow in a field, a magpie in a hedge, are to him very odd animals—he can't tell what to make of them, or how they live. He does not altogether like the accommodations at the inns—it is not what he has been used to in town. He begins to be communicative—says he was "born within the sound of Bow-bell," and attempts some jokes, at which nobody laughs. He asks the coachman a question, to which he receives no answer. All this is to him very unaccountable and unexpected. He arrives at his journey's end; and instead of being the great man he anticipated among his friends and country relations, finds that they are barely civil to him, or make a butt of him; have topics of their own which he is as completely ignorant of as they are indifferent to what he says, so that he is glad to get back to London again, where he meets with his favourite indulgences and associates, and fancies the whole world is occupied with what he hears and sees.

A Cockney loves a tea-garden in summer, as he loves the play or the Cider-Cellar in winter—where he sweetens the air with the fumes of tobacco, and makes it echo to the sound of his own voice. This kind of suburban retreat is a most agreeable relief to the close and confined air of a city life. The imagination, long pent up behind a counter or between brick walls, with noisome smells, and dingy objects, cannot bear at once to launch into the boundless expanse of the country, but "shorter excursions tries," coveting something between the two, and finding it at White-conduit House, or the Rosemary Branch, or Bagnigge Wells. The landlady is seen at a bow-window in near perspective, with punch-bowls and lemons disposed orderly around—the lime-trees or poplars wave overhead to "catch the breezy air," through which, typical of the huge dense cloud that hangs over the metropolis, curls up the thin, blue, odoriferous vapour of Virginia or Oronooko—the benches are ranged in rows, the fields and hedge-rows spread out their verdure; Hampstead and Highgate are seen in the back-ground, and contain the imagination within gentle limits—here the holiday people are playing ball; here they are playing bowls—here they are quaffing ale, there sipping tea—here the loud wager is

heard, there the political debate. In a sequestered nook a slender youth with purple face and drooping head, nodding over a glass of gin toddy, breathes in tender accents—"There's nought so sweet on earth as Love's young dream;" while "Rosy Ann" takes its turn, and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" is thundered forth in accents that might wake the dead. In another part sit carpers and critics, who dispute the score of the reckoning or the game, or cavil at the taste and execution of the *would-be* Brahams and Durusets. Of this latter class was Dr. Goodman, a man of other times—I mean of those of Smollett and Defoe—who was curious in opinion, obstinate in the wrong, great in little things, and inveterate in petty warfare. I vow he held me an argument once "an hour by St. Dunstan's clock," while I held an umbrella over his head (the friendly protection of which he was unwilling to quit to walk in the rain to Camberwell) to prove to me that Richard Pinch was neither a fives-player nor a pleasing singer. "Sir," said he, "I deny that Mr. Pinch plays the game. He is a cunning player, but not a good one. I grant his tricks, his little mean dirty ways, but he is not a manly antagonist. He has no hit, and no left-hand. How then can he set up for a superior player?

And then as to his always striking the ball against the side-wings at Copenhagen-house, Cavanagh, sir, used to say, 'The wall was made to hit at!' I have no patience with such pitiful shifts and advantages. They are an insult upon so fine and athletic a game! And as to his setting up for a singer, it's quite ridiculous. You know, Mr. H——, that to be a really excellent singer, a man must lay claim to one of two things; in the first place, sir, he must have a naturally fine ear for music, or secondly, an early education, exclusively devoted to that study. But no one ever suspected Mr. Pinch of refined sensibility; and his education, as we all know, has been a little at large. Then again, why should he of all other things be always singing "Rosy Ann," and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," till one is sick of hearing them? It's preposterous, and I mean to tell him so. You know, I'm sure, without my hinting it, that in the first of these admired songs, the sentiment is voluptuous and tender, and in the last patriotic. Now Pinch's romance never wandered from behind his counter, and his patriotism lies in his breeches' pocket. Sir, the utmost he should aspire to would be to play upon the Jews' harp!" This story of the Jews' harp tickled some of Pinch's friends, who

gave him various hints of it, which nearly drove him mad, till he discovered what it was; for though no jest or sarcasm ever had the least effect upon him, yet he cannot bear to think that there should be any joke of this kind about him, and he not in the secret: it makes against that *knowing* character which he so much affects. Pinch is in one respect a complete specimen of a *Cockney*. He never has any thing to say, and yet is never at a loss for an answer. That is, his pertness keeps exact pace with his dulness. His friend, the Doctor, used to complain of this in good set terms.—"You can never make any thing of Mr. Pinch," he would say. "Apply the most cutting remark to him, and his only answer is, '*The same to you, sir.*' If Shakespear were to rise from the dead to confute him, I firmly believe it would be to no purpose. I assure you, I have found it so. I once thought indeed I had him at a disadvantage, but I was mistaken. You shall hear, sir. I had been reading the following sentiment in a modern play—'The Road to Ruin,' by the late Mr. Holcroft—'For how should the soul of Socrates inhabit the body of a stocking-weaver?' This was pat to the point (you know our friend is a hosier and haberdasher) I came full with it to keep an appointment I had with

Pinch, began a game, quarrelled with him in the middle of it on purpose, went up stairs to dress, and as I was washing my hands in the slop-basin (watching my opportunity) turned coolly round and said, 'It's impossible there should be any sympathy between you and me, Mr. Pinch: for as the poet says, how should the soul of Socrates inhabit the body of a stocking-weaver?' 'Ay,' says he, 'does the poet say so? *then the same to you,* sir!' I was confounded, I gave up the attempt to conquer him in wit or argument. He would pose the Devil, sir, by his 'The *same to you, sir.*'" We had another joke against Richard Pinch, to which the Doctor was not a party, which was, that being asked after the respectability of the *Hole in the Wall,* at the time that Randall took it, he answered quite unconsciously, "Oh! it's a very genteel place, I go there myself sometimes!" Dr. Goodman was descended by the mother's side from the poet Jago, was a private gentleman in town, and a medical dilettanti in the country, dividing his time equally between business and pleasure; had an inexhaustible flow of words, and an imperturbable vanity, and held "stout notions on the metaphysical score." He maintained the free agency of man, with the spirit of a martyr and the gaiety of a man of

wit and pleasure about town—told me he had a curious tract on that subject by A. C. (Anthony Collins) which he carefully locked up in his box, lest any one should see it but himself, to the detriment of their character and morals, and put it to me whether it was not hard, on the principles of *philosophical necessity*, for a man to come to be hanged? To which I replied, "I thought it hard on any terms!" A knavish *marker*, who had listened to the dispute, laughed at this retort, and seemed to assent to the truth of it, supposing it might one day be his own case.

Mr. Smith and the Brangtons, in "Evelina," are the finest possible examples of the spirit of *Cockneyism*. I once knew a linen-draper in the City, who owned to me he did not quite like this part of Miss Burney's novel. He said, "I myself lodge in a first floor, where there are young ladies in the house: they sometimes have company, and if I am out, they ask me to lend them the use of my apartment, which I readily do out of politeness, or if it is an agreeable party, I perhaps join them. All this is so like what passes in the novel, that I fancy myself a sort of second Mr. Smith, and am not quite easy at it!" This was mentioned to the fair Authoress, and she was delighted to find

that her characters were so true, that an actual person fancied himself to be one of them. The resemblance, however, was only in the externals; and the real modesty of the individual stumbled on the likeness to a city coxcomb!

It is curious to what a degree persons, brought up in certain occupations in a great city, are shut up from a knowledge of the world, and carry their simplicity to a pitch of unheard-of extravagance. London is the only place in which the child grows completely up into the man. I have known characters of this kind, which, in the way of childish ignorance and self-pleasing delusion, exceeded any thing to be met with in Shakespear or Ben Jonson, or the old comedy. For instance, the following may be taken as a true sketch. Imagine a person with a florid, shining complexion like a plough-boy, large staring teeth, a merry eye, his hair stuck into the fashion with curling-irons and pomatum, a slender figure, and a decent suit of black—add to which the thoughtlessness of the school-boy, the forwardness of the thriving tradesman, and the plenary consciousness of the citizen of London—and you have Mr. Dunster before you, the fishmonger in the Poultry. You shall hear how he chirps over his cups, and exults in his private opinions. "I'll play no more with you," I said,

"Mr. Dunster—you are five points in the game better than I am." I had just lost three half-crown rubbers at cribbage to him, which loss of mine he presently thrust into a canvas pouch (not a silk purse) out of which he had produced just before, first a few halfpence, then half a dozen pieces of silver, then a handfull of guineas, and lastly, lying *perdu* at the bottom, a fifty pound Bank-Note. "I'll tell you what," I said, "I should like to play you a game at marbles"—this was at a sort of Christmas party or Twelfth Night merry-making. "Marbles!" said Dunster, catching up the sound, and his eye brightening with childish glee, "What! you mean *ring-taw?*" "Yes." "I should beat you at it, to a certainty. I was one of the best in our school (it was at Clapham, sir, the Rev. Mr. Denman's, at Clapham, was the place where I was brought up) though there were two others there better than me. They were the best that ever were. I'll tell you, sir, I'll give you an idea. There was a water-butt or cistern, sir, at our school, that turned with a cock. Now suppose that brass-ring that the window-curtain is fastened to, to be the cock, and that these boys were standing where we are, about twenty feet off—well, sir, I'll tell you what I have seen them do. One of them had a favourite taw (or

alley we used to call them) he'd take aim at the cock of the cistern with this marble, as I may do now. Well, sir, will you believe it? such was his strength of knuckle and certainty of aim, he'd hit it, turn it, let the water out, and then, sir, when the water had run out as much as it was wanted, the other boy (he 'd just the same strength of knuckle, and the same certainty of eye) he'd aim at it too, be sure to hit it, turn it round, and stop the water from running out. Yes, what I tell you is very remarkable, but it's true. One of these boys was named Cock, and t' other Butler." "They might have been named Spigot and Fawcett, my dear sir, from your account of them." "I should not mind playing you at fives neither, though I'm out of practice. I think I should beat you in a week: I was a real good one at that. A pretty game, sir! I had the finest ball, that I suppose ever was seen. Made it myself, I'll tell you how, sir. You see, I put a piece of cork at the bottom, then I wound some fine worsted yarn round it, then I had to bind it round with some packthread, and then sew the case on. You'd hardly believe it, but I was the envy of the whole school for that ball. They all wanted to get it from me, but lord, sir, I would let none

of them come near it. I kept it in my waistcoat pocket all day, and at night I used to take it to bed with me and put it under my pillow. I could n't sleep easy without it."

The same idle vein might be found in the country, but I doubt whether it would find a tongue to give it utterance. Cockneyism is a ground of native shallowness mounted with pertness and conceit. Yet with all this simplicity and extravagance in dilating on his favourite topics, Dunster is a man of spirit, of attention to business, knows how to make out and get in his bills, and is far from being hen-pecked. One thing is certain, that such a man must be a true Englishman and a loyal subject. He has a slight tinge of letters, with shame I confess it—has in his possession a volume of the European Magazine for the year 1761, and is an humble admirer of Tristram Shandy (particularly the story of the King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles, which is something in his own endless manner) and of Gil Blas of Santillane. Over these (the last thing before he goes to bed at night) he smokes a pipe, and meditates for an hour. After all, what is there in these harmless half-lies, these fantastic exaggerations, but a literal, prosaic, *Cockney* translation of the ad-

mired lines in Gray's Ode to Eton College:—

> "What idle progeny succeed
> To chase the rolling circle's speed
> Or urge the flying ball?"

A man shut up all his life in his shop, without any thing to interest him from one year's end to another but the cares and details of business, with scarcely any intercourse with books or opportunities for society, distracted with the buzz and glare and noise about him, turns for relief to the retrospect of his childish years; and there, through the long vista, at one bright loop-hole, leading out of the thorny mazes of the world into the clear morning light, he sees the idle fancies and gay amusements of his boyhood dancing like motes in the sunshine. Shall we blame or should we laugh at him, if his eye glistens, and his tongue grows wanton in their praise?

None but a Scotchman would—that pragmatical sort of personage, who thinks it a folly ever to have been young, and who instead of dallying with the frail past, bends his brows upon the future, and looks only to the *main-chance*. Forgive me, dear Dunster, if I have drawn a sketch of some of thy venial foibles, and delivered thee into the hands of these

Cockneys of the North, who will fall upon thee and devour thee, like so many cannibals, without a grain of salt!

If familiarity in cities breeds contempt, ignorance in the country breeds aversion and dislike. People come too much in contact in town: in other places they live too much apart, to unite cordially and easily. Our feelings, in the former case, are dissipated and exhausted by being called into constant and vain activity; in the latter they rust and grow dead for want of use. If there is an air of levity and indifference in London manners, there is a harshness, a moroseness, and disagreeable restraint in those of the country. We have little disposition to sympathy, when we have few persons to sympathise with: we lose the relish and capacity for social enjoyment, the seldomer we meet. A habit of sullenness, coldness, and misanthropy grows upon us. If we look for hospitality and a cheerful welcome in country places, it must be in those where the arrival of a stranger is an event, the recurrence of which need not be greatly apprehended, or it must be on rare occasions, on "some high festival of once a year." Then indeed the stream of hospitality, so long dammed up, may flow without stint for a short season; or a stranger may be expected with the same sort of eager impatience

as a caravan of wild beasts, or any other natural curiosity, that excites our wonder and fills up the craving of the mind after novelty. By degrees, however, even this last principle loses its effect: books, newspapers, whatever carries us out of ourselves into a world of which we see and know nothing, becomes distasteful, repulsive; and we turn away with indifference or disgust from every thing that disturbs our lethargic animal existence, or takes off our attention from our petty, local interests and pursuits. Man, left long to himself, is no better than a mere clod; or his activity, for want of some other vent, preys upon himself, or is directed to splenetic, peevish dislikes, or vexatious, harassing persecution of others. I once drew a picture of a country-life: it was a portrait of a particular place, a caricature if you will, but with certain allowances, I fear it was too like in the individual instance, and that it would hold too generally true. *See* ROUND TABLE, vol. ii. p. 116.

If these then are the faults and vices of the inhabitants of town or of the country, where should a man go to live, so as to escape from them? I answer, that in the country we have the society of the groves, the fields, the brooks, and in London a man may keep to himself, or chuse his company as he pleases.

It appears to me that there is an amiable mixture of these two opposite characters in a person who chances to have past his youth in London, and who has retired into the country for the rest of his life. We may find in such a one a social polish, a pastoral simplicity. He rusticates agreeably, and vegetates with a degree of sentiment. He comes to the next post-town to see for letters, watches the coaches as they pass, and eyes the passengers with a look of familiar curiosity, thinking that he too was a gay fellow in his time. He turns his horse's head down the narrow lane that leads homewards, puts on an old coat to save his wardrobe, and fills his glass nearer to the brim. As he lifts the purple juice to his lips and to his eye, and in the dim solitude that hems him round, thinks of the glowing line—

"This bottle 's the sun of our table"—

another sun rises upon his imagination; the sun of his youth, the blaze of vanity, the glitter of the metropolis, "glares round his soul, and mocks his closing eye-lids." The distant roar of coaches is in his ears—the pit stare upon him with a thousand eyes—Mrs. Siddons, Bannister, King, are before him—he starts as from a dream, and swears he will to London; but the expense,

the length of way deters him, and he rises the next morning to trace the footsteps of the hare that has brushed the dew-drops from the lawn, or to attend a meeting of Magistrates! Mr. Justice Shallow answered in some sort to this description of a retired Cockney and indigenous country-gentleman. He "knew the Inns of Court, where they would talk of mad Shallow yet, and where the bona robas were, and had them at commandment: aye, and had heard the chimes at midnight!"

It is a strange state of society (such as that in London) where a man does not know his next-door neighbour, and where the feelings (one would think) must recoil upon themselves, and either fester or become obtuse. Mr. Wordsworth, in the preface to his poem of the "Excursion," represents men in cities as so many wild beasts or evil spirits, shut up in cells of ignorance, without natural affections, and barricadoed down in sensuality and selfishness. The nerve of humanity is bound up, according to him, the circulation of the blood stagnates. And it would be so, if men were merely cut off from intercourse with their immediate neighbours, and did not meet together generally and more at large. But man in London becomes, as Mr. Burke has it, a sort of "public creature."

He lives in the eye of the world, and the world in his. If he witnesses less of the details of private life, he has better opportunities of observing its larger masses and varied movements. He sees the stream of human life pouring along the streets—its comforts and embellishments piled up in the shops—the houses are proofs of the industry, the public buildings of the art and magnificence of man; while the public amusements and places of resort are a centre and support for social feeling. A playhouse alone is a school of humanity, where all eyes are fixed on the same gay or solemn scene, where smiles or tears are spread from face to face, and where a thousand hearts beat in unison! Look at the company in a country-theatre (in comparison) and see the coldness, the sullenness, the want of sympathy, and the way in which they turn round to scan and scrutinise one another. In London there is a *public;* and each man is part of it. We are gregarious, and affect the kind. We have a sort of abstract existence; and a community of ideas and knowledge (rather than local proximity) is the bond of society and good-fellowship. This is one great cause of the tone of political feeling in large and populous cities. There is here a visible body-politic, a type and image of that huge Leviathan the State. We

comprehend that vast denomination, the *People*, of which we see a tenth part daily moving before us; and by having our imaginations emancipated from petty interests and personal dependence, we learn to venerate ourselves as men, and to respect the rights of human nature. Therefore it is that the citizens and freemen of London and Westminster are patriots by prescription, philosophers and politicians by the right of their birth-place. In the country, men are no better than a herd of cattle or scattered deer. They have no idea but of individuals, none of rights or principles—and a king, as the greatest individual, is the highest idea they can form. He is "a species alone," and as superior to any single peasant as the latter is to the peasant's dog, or to a crow flying over his head. In London the king is but as one to a million (numerically speaking), is seldom seen, and then distinguished only from others by the superior graces of his person. A country 'squire or a lord of the manor is a greater man in his village or hundred!

ESSAY VIII.

ON THE SPIRIT OF OBLIGATIONS.

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ON THE SPIRIT OF OBLIGATIONS.

The two rarest things to be met with are good sense and good-nature. For one man who judges right, there are twenty who can say good things; as there are numbers who will serve you or do friendly actions, for one who really wishes you well. It has been said, and often repeated, that "mere good-nature is a fool:" but I think that the dearth of sound sense, for the most part, proceeds from the want of a real, unaffected interest in things, except as they react upon ourselves; or from a neglect of the maxim of that good old philanthropist, who said, "*Nihil humani a me alienum puto.*" The narrowness of the heart warps the understanding, and makes us weigh objects in the scales of our self-love, instead of those of truth and justice. We consider not the merits of the case, or what is due to others, but the manner in which our own credit or consequence will be affected; and adapt our opinions and conduct

to the last of these rather than to the first. The judgment is seldom wrong where the feelings are right; and they generally are so, provided they are warm and sincere. He who intends others well, is likely to advise them for the best; he who has any cause at heart, seldom ruins it by his imprudence. Those who play the public or their friends slippery tricks, have in secret no objection to betray them.

One finds out the folly and malice of mankind by the impertinence of friends—by their professions of service and tenders of advice—by their fears for your reputation and anticipation of what the world may say of you; by which means they suggest objections to your enemies, and at the same time absolve themselves from the task of justifying your errors, by having warned you of the consequences—by the care with which they tell you ill-news, and conceal from you any flattering circumstance—by their dread of your engaging in any creditable attempt, and mortification, if you succeed—by the difficulties and hindrances they throw in your way—by their satisfaction when you happen to make a slip or get into a scrape, and their determination to tie your hands behind you, lest you should get out of it—by their panic-terrors at your entering into a vindication of yourself, est in the

course of it, you should call upon them for a certificate to your character—by their lukewarmness in defending, by their readiness in betraying you—by the high standard by which they try you, and to which you can hardly ever come up—by their forwardness to partake your triumphs, by their backwardness to share your disgrace—by their acknowledgment of your errors out of candour, and suppression of your good qualities out of envy—by their not contradicting, or by their joining in the cry against you, lest they too should become objects of the same abuse—by their playing the game into your adversaries' hands, by always letting their imaginations take part with their cowardice, their vanity, and selfishness against you; and thus realising or hastening all the ill consequences they affect to deplore, by spreading abroad that very spirit of distrust, obloquy, and hatred which they predict will be excited against you!

In all these pretended demonstrations of an over-anxiety for our welfare, we may detect a great deal of spite and ill-nature lurking under the disguise of a friendly and officious zeal. It is wonderful how much love of mischief and rankling spleen lies at the bottom of the human heart, and how a constant supply of gall seems as necessary to the health and activity of the

mind as of the body. Yet perhaps it ought not to excite much surprise that this gnawing, morbid, acrimonious temper should produce the effects it does, when, if it does not vent itself on others, it preys upon our own comforts, and makes us see the worst side of every thing, even as it regards our own prospects and tranquillity. It is the not being comfortable in ourselves, that makes us seek to render other people uncomfortable. A person of this character will advise you against a prosecution for a libel, and shake his head at your attempting to shield yourself from a shower of calumny—It is not that he is afraid you will be *nonsuited*, but that you will gain a verdict! They caution you against provoking hostility, in order that you may submit to indignity. They say that "if you publish a certain work, it will be your ruin"—hoping that it will, and by their tragical denunciations, bringing about this very event as far as it lies in their power, or at any rate, enjoying a premature triumph over you in the mean time. What I would say to any friend who may be disposed to foretel a general outcry against any work of mine, would be to request him to judge and speak of it for himself, as he thinks it deserves—and not by his overweening scruples and qualms of conscience on my ac-

count, to afford those very persons whose hostility he deprecates the cue they are to give to party-prejudice, and which they may justify by his authority.

Suppose you are about to give Lectures at a Public Institution, these friends and well-wishers hope "you'll be turned out—if you preserve your principles, they are sure you will." Is it that your consistency gives them any concern? No, but they are uneasy at your gaining a chance of a little popularity—they do not like this new feather in your cap, they wish to see it struck out, *for the sake of your character*—and when this was once the case, it would be an additional relief to them to see your character following the same road the next day. The exercise of their bile seems to be the sole employment and gratification of such people. They deal in the miseries of human life. They are always either hearing or foreboding some new grievance. They cannot contain their satisfaction, if you tell them any mortification or cross-accident that has happened to yourself; and if you complain of their want of sympathy, they laugh in your face. This would be unaccountable, but for the spirit of perversity and contradiction implanted in human nature. If things go right, there is nothing to be done—these active-minded persons

grow restless, dull, vapid—life is a sleep, a sort of *euthanasia*—Let them go wrong, and all is well again; they are once more on the alert, have something to pester themselves and other people about; may wrangle on, and "make mouths at the invisible event!" Luckily, there is no want of materials for this disposition to work upon, *there is plenty of grist for the mill.* If you fall in love, they tell you (by way of consolation) it is a pity that you do not fall downstairs and fracture a limb—it would be a relief to your mind, and shew you your folly. So they would reform the world. The class of persons I speak of are almost uniform grumblers and croakers against governments; and it must be confessed, governments are of great service in fostering their humours. "Born for their use, they live but to oblige them." While kings are left free to exercise their proper functions, and poet-laureats make out their Mittimus to Heaven without a warrant, they will never stop the mouths of the censorious by changing their dispositions; the juices of faction will ferment, and the secretions of the state be duly performed! I do not mind when a character of this sort meets a Minister of State like an east-wind round a corner, and gives him an ague-fit; but why should he meddle with me? Why

should he tell me I write too much, and say that I should gain reputation if I could contrive to starve for a twelvemonth? Or if I apply to him for a loan of fifty pounds for present necessity, send me word back that he has too much regard for me, to comply with my request? It is unhandsome irony. It is not friendly, 'tis not pardonable*.

I like real good-nature and good-will, better than I do any offers of patronage or plausible rules for my conduct in life. I may suspect the soundness of the last, and I may not be quite sure of the motives of the first. People complain of ingratitude for benefits, and of the neglect of wholesome advice. In the first place, we pay little attention to advice, because we are seldom thought of in it. The person who gives it either contents himself to lay down (*ex cathedrâ*) certain vague, general maxims, and "wise saws," which we knew before; or, instead of considering what we *ought to do*, recommends what he himself *would do*. He merely substitutes his own will, caprice, and prejudices for ours, and expects us to be guided by them. Instead of changing places with us (to see what is best to be done in the given circumstances), he

* This circumstance did not happen to me, but to an acquaintance.

insists on our looking at the question from his point of view, and acting in such a manner as to please him. This is not at all reasonable; for *one man's meat*, according to the old adage, *is another man's poison*. And it is not strange, that starting from such opposite premises, we should seldom jump in a conclusion, and that the art of giving and taking advice is little better than a game at cross-purposes. I have observed that those who are the most inclined to assist others are the least forward or peremptory with their advice; for having our interest really at heart, they consider what can, rather than what *cannot* be done, and aid our views and endeavour to avert ill consequences by moderating our impatience and allaying irritations, instead of thwarting our main design, which only tends to make us more extravagant and violent than ever. In the second place, benefits are often conferred out of ostentation or pride, rather than from true regard; and the person obliged is too apt to perceive this. People who are fond of appearing in the light of patrons will perhaps go through fire and water to serve you, who yet would be sorry to find you no longer wanted their assistance, and whose friendship cools and their good-will slackens, as you are relieved by their active zeal from the neces-

sity of being further beholden to it. Compassion and generosity are their favourite virtues; and they countenance you, as you afford them opportunities for exercising them. The instant you can go alone, or can stand upon your own ground, you are discarded as unfit for their purpose.

This is something more than mere good-nature or humanity. A thoroughly good-natured man, a real friend, is one who is pleased at our good-fortune, as well as prompt to seize every occasion of relieving our distress. We apportion our gratitude accordingly. We are thankful for good-will rather than for services, for the motive than the *quantum* of favour received —a kind word or look is never forgotten, while we cancel prouder and weightier obligations; and those who esteem us or evince a partiality to us are those whom we still consider as our best friends. Nay, so strong is this feeling, that we extend it even to those counterfeits in friendship, flatterers and sycophants. Our self-love, rather than our self-interest, is the master-key to our affections.

I am not convinced that those are always the best-natured or the best-conditioned men, who busy themselves most with the distresses of their fellow-creatures. I do not know that those

whose names stand at the head of all subscriptions to charitable institutions, and who are perpetual stewards of dinners and meetings to encourage and promote the establishment of asylums for the relief of the blind, the halt, and the orphan poor, are persons gifted with the best tempers or the kindliest feelings. I do not dispute their virtue, I doubt their sensibility. I am not here speaking of those who make a trade of the profession of humanity, or set their names down out of mere idle parade and vanity. I mean those who really enter into the details and drudgery of this sort of service, *con amore*, and who delight in surveying and in diminishing the amount of human misery. I conceive it possible, that a person who is going to pour oil and balm into the wounds of afflicted humanity, at a meeting of the Western Dispensary, by handsome speeches and by a handsome donation (not grudgingly given) may be thrown into a fit of rage that very morning, by having his toast too much buttered, may quarrel with the innocent prattle and amusements of his children, cry "Pish!" at every observation his wife utters, and scarcely feel a moment's comfort at any period of his life, except when he hears or reads of some case of pressing distress that calls for his immediate interference, and draws

off his attention from his own situation and feelings by the act of alleviating it. Those martyrs to the cause of humanity, in short, who run the gauntlet of the whole catalogue of unheard-of crimes and afflicting casualties, who ransack prisons, and plunge into lazar-houses and slave-ships as their daily amusement and highest luxury, must generally, I think (though not always), be prompted to the arduous task by uneasy feelings of their own, and supported through it by iron nerves. Their fortitude must be equal to their pity. I do not think Mr. Wilberforce a case in point in this argument. He is evidently a delicately-framed, nervous, sensitive man. I should suppose him to be a kind and affectionately disposed person in all the relations of life. His weakness is too quick a sense of reputation, a desire to have the good word of all men, a tendency to truckle to power and fawn on opinion. But there are some of these philanthropists that a physiognomist has hard work to believe in. They seem made of pasteboard, they look like mere machines: their benevolence may be said to go on rollers, and they are screwed to the sticking-place by the wheels and pulleys of humanity:

> "If to their share some splendid virtues fall,
> Look in their face, and you forget them all."

They appear so much the creatures of the head and so little of the heart, they are so cold, so lifeless, so mechanical, so much governed by calculation, and so little by impulse, that it seems the toss-up of a halfpenny, a mere turn of a feather, whether such people should become a Granville Sharp, or a Hubert in "King John," a Howard, or a Sir Hudson Lowe!

"Charity covers a multitude of sins." Wherever it is, there nothing can be wanting; wherever it is not, all else is vain. "The meanest peasant on the bleakest mountain is not without a portion of it (says Sterne), he finds the lacerated lamb of another's flock," &c. (See the passage in the *Sentimental Journey*.) I do not think education or circumstances can ever entirely eradicate this principle. Some professions may be supposed to blunt it, but it is perhaps more in appearance than in reality. Butchers are not allowed to sit on a jury for life and death; but probably this is a prejudice: if they have the *destructive organ* in an unusual degree of expansion, they vent their sanguinary inclinations on the brute creation; and besides, they look too jolly, rosy, and in good case (they and their wives), to harbour much cruelty in their dispositions. Neither would I swear that a man was humane, merely for abstaining from animal food.

A tiger would not be a lamb, though it fed on milk. Surgeons are in general thought to be unfeeling, and steeled by custom to the sufferings of humanity. They may be so, as far as relates to broken bones and bruises, but not to other things. Nor are they necessarily so in their profession; for we find different degrees of callous insensibility in different individuals. Some practitioners have an evident delight in alarming the apprehensions and cutting off the limbs of their patients: these would have been ill-natured men in any situation in life, and merely make an excuse of their profession to indulge their natural ill-humour and brutality of temper. A surgeon who is fond of giving pain to those who consult him will not spare the feelings of his neighbours in other respects; has a tendency to probe other wounds besides those of the body; and is altogether a harsh and disagreeable character. A Jack-Ketch may be known to tie the fatal noose with trembling fingers; or a jailor may have a heart softer than the walls of his prison. There have been instances of highwaymen who were proverbially gentlemen. I have seen a Bow-street officer*(not but that the transition is ungracious and unjust)

* Lavender.

reading Racine, and following the recitation of Talma at the door of a room, which he was sent to guard. Police-magistrates, from the scenes they have to witness and the characters they come in contact with, may be supposed to lose the fine edge of delicacy and sensibility: yet they are not all alike, but differ, as one star differs from another in magnitude. One is as remarkable for mildness and lenity, as another is notorious for harshness and severity. The late Mr. Justice Fielding was a member of this profession, which (however little accordant with his own feelings) he made pleasant to those of others. He generally sent away the disputants in that unruly region, where he presided, tolerably satisfied. I have often seen him, escaped from the noisy repulsive scene, sunning himself in the adjoining walks of St. James's Park, and with mild aspect, and lofty but unwieldy mien, eyeing the verdant glades and lengthening vistas where perhaps his childhood loitered. He had a strong resemblance to his father, the immortal author of "Tom Jones." I never passed him, that I did not take off my hat to him in spirit. I could not help thinking of Parson Adams, of Booth and Amelia. I seemed to belong, by intellectual adoption, to the same family, and would willingly have acknowledged my obliga-

tions to the father to the son. He had something of the air of Colonel Bath. When young, he had very excellent prospects in the law, but neglected a brief sent him by the Attorney-General, in order to attend a glee-club, for which he had engaged to furnish a rondeau. This spoiled his fortune. A man whose object is to please himself, or to keep his word to his friends, is the last man to thrive at court. Yet he looked serene and smiling to his latest breath, conscious of the goodness of his own heart, and of not having sullied a name that had thrown a light upon humanity!

There are different modes of obligation, and different avenues to our gratitude and favour. A man may lend his countenance who will not part with his money, and open his mind to us who will not draw out his purse. How many ways are there, in which our peace may be assailed, besides actual want! How many comforts do we stand in need of, besides meat and drink and clothing! Is it nothing to "administer to a mind diseased"—to heal a wounded spirit? After all other difficulties are removed, we still want some one to bear with our infirmities, to impart our confidence to, to encourage us in our *hobbies* (nay, to get up and ride behind us) and to like us with all our faults. True friend-

ship is self-love at second-hand; where, as in a flattering mirror, we may see our virtues magnified and our errors softened, and where we may fancy our opinion of ourselves confirmed by an impartial and faithful witness. He (of all the world) creeps the closest in our bosoms, into our favour and esteem, who thinks of us most nearly as we do of ourselves. Such a one is indeed the pattern of a friend, another self—and our gratitude for the blessing is as sincere, as it is hollow in most other cases! This is one reason why entire friendship is scarcely to be found, except in love. There is a hardness and severity in our judgments of one another; the spirit of competition also intervenes, unless where there is too great an inequality of pretension or difference of taste to admit of mutual sympathy and respect; but a woman's vanity is interested in making the object of her choice the God of her idolatry; and in the intercourse with that sex, there is the finest balance and reflection of opposite and answering excellences imaginable! It is in the highest spirit of the religion of love in the female breast, that Lord Byron has put that beautiful apostrophe into the mouth of Anah, in speaking of her angel-lover (alas! are not the sons of men too, when they are deified in the hearts of

women, only "a little lower than the angels?")

> "And when I think that his immortal wings
> Shall one day hover o'er the sepulchre
> Of the poor child of clay, that so adored him,
> As he adored the Highest, death becomes
> Less terrible!"

This is a dangerous string, which I ought never to touch upon; but the shattered cords vibrate of themselves!

The difference of age, of situation in life, and an absence of all considerations of business have, I apprehend, something of the same effect in producing a refined and abstracted friendship. The person, whose doors I enter with most pleasure, and quit with most regret, never did me the smallest favour. I once did him an uncalled-for service, and we nearly quarrelled about it. If I were in the utmost distress, I should just as soon think of asking his assistance, as of stopping a person on the highway. Practical benevolence is not his *forte*. He leaves the profession of that to others. His habits, his theory are against it as idle and vulgar. His hand is closed, but what of that? His eye is ever open, and reflects the universe: his silver accents, beautiful, venerable as his silver hairs, but not scanted, flow as a river. I never ate or

drank in his house; nor do I know or care how the flies or spiders fare in it, or whether a mouse can get a living. But I know that I can get there what I get nowhere else—a welcome, as if one was expected to drop in just at that moment, a total absence of all respect of persons and of airs of self-consequence, endless topics of discourse, refined thoughts, made more striking by ease and simplicity of manner—the husk, the shell of humanity is left at the door, and the spirit, mellowed by time, resides within! All you have to do is to sit and listen; and it is like hearing one of Titian's faces speak. To think of worldly matters is a profanation, like that of the money-changers in the Temple; or it is to regard the bread and wine of the Sacrament with carnal eyes. We enter the enchanter's cell, and converse with the divine inhabitant. To have this privilege always at hand, and to be circled by that spell whenever we chuse, with an "*Enter Sessami*," is better than sitting at the lower end of the tables of the Great, than eating awkwardly from gold plate, than drinking fulsome toasts, or being thankful for gross favours, and gross insults!

Few things tend more to alienate friendship than a want of punctuality in our engagements. I have known the breach of a promise to dine or

sup break up more than one intimacy. A disappointment of this kind rankles in the mind—it cuts up our pleasures (those rare events in human life, which ought not to be wantonly sported with!)—it not only deprives us of the expected gratification, but it renders us unfit for, and out of humour with, every other; it makes us think our society not worth having, which is not the way to make us delighted with our own thoughts; it lessens our self-esteem, and destroys our confidence in others; and having leisure on our hands (by being thus left alone) and sufficient provocation withal, we employ it in ripping up the faults of the acquaintance who has played us this slippery trick, and in forming resolutions to pick a quarrel with him the very first opportunity we can find. I myself once declined an invitation to meet Talma, who was an admirer of Shakespear, and who idolized Buonaparte, to keep an appointment with a person who had *forgot* it! One great art of women, who pretend to manage their husbands and keep them to themselves, is to contrive some excuse for breaking their engagements with friends, for whom they entertain any respect, or who are likely to have any influence over them.

There is, however, a class of persons who

have a particular satisfaction in falsifying your expectations of pleasure in their society, who make appointments for no other ostensible purpose than *not to keep them;* who think their ill-behaviour gives them an air of superiority over you, instead of placing them at your mercy; and who, in fact, in all their overtures of condescending kindness towards you, treat you exactly as if there was no such person in the world. Friendship is with them a *mono-drama,* in which they play the principal and sole part. They must needs be very imposing or amusing characters to surround themselves with a circle of friends, who find that they are to be mere cyphers. The egotism would in such instances be offensive and intolerable, if its very excess did not render it entertaining. Some individuals carry this hard, unprincipled, reckless unconsciousness of every thing but themselves and their own purposes to such a pitch, that they may be compared to *automata,* whom you never expect to consult your feelings or alter their movements out of complaisance to others. They are wound up to a certain point, by an internal machinery which you do not very well comprehend; but if they perform their accustomed evolutions so as to excite your wonder or laughter, it is all very well, you do not quarrel

with them, but look on at the *pantomime* of friendship while it lasts or is agreeable.

There are (I may add here) a happy few, whose manner is so engaging and delightful, that injure you how they will, they cannot offend you. They rob, ruin, ridicule you, and you cannot find in your heart to say a word against them. The late Mr. Sheridan was a man of this kind. He *could not* make enemies. If any one came to request the repayment of a loan from him, he borrowed more. A cordial shake of his hand was a receipt in full for all demands. He could "coin his *smile* for drachmas," cancelled bonds with *bon mots*, and gave jokes in discharge of a bill. A friend of his said, "If I pull off my hat to him in the street, it costs me fifty pounds, and if he speaks to me, it's a hundred!"

Only one other reflection occurs to me on this subject. I used to think better of the world than I do. I thought its great fault, its original sin, was barbarous ignorance and want, which would be cured by the diffusion of civilization and letters. But I find (or fancy I do) that as selfishness is the vice of unlettered periods and nations, envy is the bane of more refined and intellectual ones. Vanity springs out of the grave of sordid self-interest. Men were formerly ready to cut

one another's throats about the gross means of subsistence, and now they are ready to do it about reputation. The worst is, you are no better off, if you fail than if you succeed. You are despised if you do not excel others, and hated if you do. Abuse or praise equally weans your friends from you. We cannot bear eminence in our own department or pursuit, and think it an impertinence in any other. Instead of being delighted with the proofs of excellence and the admiration paid to it, we are mortified with it, thrive only by the defeat of others, and live on the carcase of mangled reputation. By being tried by an *ideal* standard of vanity and affectation, real objects and common people become odious or insipid. Instead of being raised, all is prostituted, degraded, vile. Every thing is reduced to this feverish, importunate, harassing state. I'm heartily sick of it, and I'm sure I have reason if any one has.

ESSAY IX.

ON THE OLD AGE OF ARTISTS.

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ON THE OLD AGE OF ARTISTS.

Mr. Nollekens died the other day at the age of eighty, and left 240,000 pounds behind him, and the name of one of our best English sculptors. There was a great scramble among the legatees, a codicil to a will with large bequests unsigned, and that last triumph of the dead or dying over those who survive—hopes raised and defeated without a possibility of retaliation, or the smallest use in complaint. The king was at first said to be left residuary legatee. This would have been a fine instance of romantic and gratuitous homage to Majesty, in a man who all his life-time could never be made to comprehend the abstract idea of the distinction of ranks or even of persons. He would go up to the Duke of York, or Prince of Wales (in spite of warning), take them familiarly by the button like common acquaintance, ask them *how their father did;* and express pleasure at hearing he was well, saying, "when he was gone, we should

never get such another." He once, when the old king was sitting to him for his bust, fairly stuck a pair of compasses into his nose to measure the distance from the upper lip to the forehead, as if he had been measuring a block of marble. His late Majesty laughed heartily at this, and was amused to find that there was a person in the world, ignorant of that vast interval which separated him from every other man. Nollekens, with all his loyalty, merely liked the man, and cared nothing about the king (which was one of those *mixed modes*, as Mr. Locke calls them, of which he had no more idea than if he had been one of the cream-coloured horses)—handled him like so much common clay, and had no other notion of the matter, but that it was his business to make the best bust of him he possibly could, and to set about in the regular way. There was something in this plainness and simplicity that savoured perhaps of the hardness and dryness of his art, and of his own peculiar severity of manner. He conceived that one man's head differed from another's only as it was a better or worse subject for modelling, that a bad bust was not made into a good one by being stuck upon a pedestal, or by any painting or varnishing, and that by whatever name he was called, "*a man's a man for a' that.*" A sculptor's ideas

must, I should guess, be somewhat rigid and inflexible, like the materials in which he works. Besides, Nollekens's style was comparatively hard and edgy. He had as much truth and character, but none of the polished graces or transparent softness of Chantry. He had more of the rough, plain, downright honesty of his art. It seemed to be his character. Mr. Northcote was once complimenting him on his acknowledged superiority—"Ay, *you* made the best busts of any body!" "I don't know about that," said the other, his eyes (though their orbs were quenched) smiling with a gleam of smothered delight—"I only know I always tried to make them as like as I could!"

I saw this eminent and singular person one morning in Mr. Northcote's painting-room. He had then been for some time blind, and had been obliged to lay aside the exercise of his profession; but he still took a pleasure in designing groups, and in giving directions to others for executing them. He and Northcote made a remarkable pair. He sat down on a low stool (from being rather fatigued), rested with both hands on a stick, as if he clung to the solid and tangible, had an habitual twitch in his limbs and motions, as if catching himself in the act of going too far in chiselling a lip or a dimple in

a chin; was *bolt*-upright, with features hard and square, but finely cut, a hooked nose, thin lips, an indented forehead; and the defect in his sight completed his resemblance to one of his own masterly busts. He seemed, by time and labour, to "have *wrought* himself to stone." Northcote stood by his side—all air and spirit, stooping down to speak to him. The painter was in a loose morning-gown, with his back to the light; his face was like a pale fine piece of colouring; and his eye came out and glanced through the twilight of the past, like an old eagle looking from its eyrie in the clouds. In a moment they had lighted from the top of Mount Cenis in the Vatican—

> "As when a vulture on Imaus bred
> Flies tow'rds the springs
> Of Ganges and Hydaspes, Indian streams,"

these two fine old men lighted with winged thoughts on the banks of the Tiber, and there bathed and drank of the spirit of their youth. They talked of Titian and Bernini; and Northcote mentioned, that when Roubilliac came back from Rome, after seeing the works of the latter, and went to look at his own in Westminster Abbey, he said—"By G—d, they looked like tobacco-pipes."

They then recalled a number of anecdotes of Day (a fellow-student of theirs), of Barry and Fuseli. Sir Joshua, and Burke, and Johnson were talked of. The names of these great sons of memory were in the room, and they almost seemed to answer to them—Genius and Fame flung a spell into the air,

> " And by the force of blear illusion,
> Had drawn me on to my confusion,"

had I not been long ere this *siren-proof!* It is delightful, though painful, to hear two veterans in art thus talking over the adventures and studies of their youth, when one feels that they are not quite mortal, that they have one imperishable part about them, and that they are conscious, as they approach the farthest verge of humanity in friendly intercourse and tranquil decay, that they have done something that will live after them. The consolations of religion apart, this is perhaps the only salve that takes out the sting of that sore evil, Death; and by lessening the impatience and alarm at his approach, often tempts him to prolong the term of his delay.

It has been remarked that artists, or at least academicians, live long. It is but a short while ago that Northcote, Nollekens, West, Flaxman,

Cosway, and Fuseli were all living at the same time, in good health and spirits, without any diminution of faculties, all of them having long past their grand climacteric, and attained to the highest reputation in their several departments. From these striking examples, the diploma of a Royal Academician seems to be a grant of a longer lease of life, among its other advantages. In fact, it is tantamount to the conferring a certain reputation in his profession and a competence on any man, and thus supplies the wants of the body and sets his mind at ease. Artists in general, (poor devils!) I am afraid, are not a long-lived race. They break up commonly about forty, their spirits giving way with the disappointment of their hopes of excellence, or the want of encouragement for that which they have attained, their plans disconcerted, and their affairs irretrievable; and in this state of mortification and embarrassment (more or less prolonged and aggravated) they are either starved or else drink themselves to death. But your Academician is quite a different sort of person. He "bears a charmed life, that must not yield" to duns, or critics, or patrons. He is free of Parnassus, and claims all the immunities of fame in his life-time. He has but to paint (as the sun has but to shine), to baffle envious

maligners. He has but to send his pictures to the Exhibition at Somerset-House, in order to have them hung up: he has but to dine once a year with the Academy, the Nobility, the Cabinet-Minister, and the Members of the Royal Family, in order not to want a dinner all the rest of the year. Shall hunger come near the man that has feasted with princes—shall a bailiff tap the shoulder on which a Marquis has familiarly leaned, that has been dubbed with knighthood? No, even the fell Serjeant Death stands as it were aloof, and he enjoys a kind of premature immortality in recorded honours and endless labours. Oh! what golden hours are his! In the short days of winter he husbands time; the long evenings of summer still find him employed! He paints on, and takes no thought for to-morrow. All is right in that respect. His bills are regularly paid, his drafts are duly honoured. He has exercise for his body, employment for his mind in his profession, and without ever stirring out of his painting-room. He studies as much of other things as he pleases. He goes into the best company, or talks with his sitters—attends at the Academy Meetings, and enters into their intrigues and cabals, or stays at home, and enjoys the *otium cum dignitate*. If he is fond of reputation, Fame watches

him at work, and weaves a woof, like Iris, over his head—if he is fond of money, Plutus digs a mine under his feet. Whatever he touches becomes gold. He is paid half-price before he begins; and commissions pour in upon commissions. His portraits are like, and his historical pieces fine; for to question the talents or success of a Royal Academician is to betray your own want of taste. Or if his pictures are not quite approved, he is an agreeable man, and converses well. Or he is a person of elegant accomplishments, dresses well, and is an ornament to a private circle. A man is not an Academician for nothing. "His life spins round on its soft axle;" and in a round of satisfied desires and pleasing avocations, without any of the *wear and tear* of thought or business, there seems no reason why it should not run smoothly on to its last sand!

Of all the Academicians, the painters, or persons I have ever known, Mr. Northcote is the most to my taste. It may be said of him truly,

> "Age cannot wither, nor custom stale
> His infinite variety."

Indeed, it is not possible he should become tedious, since, even if he repeats the same thing, it appears quite new from his manner, that

breathes new life into it, and from his eye, that is as fresh as the morning. How you hate any one who tells the same story or anticipates a remark of his—it seems so coarse and vulgar, so dry and inanimate! There is something like injustice in this preference—but no! it is a tribute to the spirit that is in the man. Mr. Northcote's manner is completely *extempore*. It is just the reverse of Mr. Canning's oratory. All his thoughts come upon him unawares, and for this reason they surprise and delight you, because they have evidently the same effect upon his mind. There is the same unconsciousness in his conversation that has been pointed out in Shakespear's dialogues; or you are startled with one observation after another, as when the mist gradually withdraws from a landscape and unfolds objects one by one. His figure is small, shadowy, emaciated; but you think only of his face, which is fine and expressive. His body is out of the question. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the *naiveté*, and unaffected, but delightful ease of the way in which he goes on—now touching upon a picture—now looking for his snuff-box—now alluding to some book he has been reading—now returning to his favourite art. He seems just as if he was by himself or in the company

of his own thoughts, and makes you feel quite at home. If it is a Member of Parliament, or a beautiful woman, or a child, or a young artist that drops in, it makes no difference; he enters into conversation with them in the same unconstrained manner, as if they were inmates in his family. Sometimes you find him sitting on the floor, like a school-boy at play, turning over a set of old prints; and I was pleased to hear him say the other day, coming to one of some men putting off in a boat from a ship-wreck—"*That* is the grandest and most original thing I ever did!" This was not egotism, but had all the beauty of truth and sincerity. The print was indeed a noble and spirited design. The circumstance from which it was taken happened to Sir Harry Englefield and his crew. He told Northcote the story, sat for his own head, and brought the men from Wapping to sit for theirs; and these he had arranged into a formal composition, till one Jeffrey, a conceited but clever artist of that day, called in upon him, and said, "Oh! that common-place thing will never do, it is like West; you should throw them into an action something like this."—Accordingly, the head of the boat was reared up like a sea-horse riding the waves, and the elements put into commotion, and when the

painter looked at it the last thing as he went out of his room in the dusk of the evening, he said that "it frightened him." He retained the expression in the faces of the men nearly as they sat to him. It is very fine, and truly English; and being natural, it was easily made into history. There is a portrait of a young gentleman striving to get into the boat, while the crew are pushing him off with their oars; but at last he prevailed with them by his perseverance and entreaties to take him in. They had only time to throw a bag of biscuits into the boat before the ship went down; which they divided into a biscuit a day for each man, dipping them into water which they collected by holding up their handkerchiefs in the rain and squeezing it into a bottle. They were out sixteen days in the Atlantic, and got ashore at some place in Spain, where the great difficulty was to prevent them from eating too much at once, so as to recover gradually. Sir Harry Englefield observed that he suffered more afterwards than at the time—that he had horrid dreams of falling down precipices for a long while after—that in the boat they told merry stories, and kept up one another's spirits as well as they could, and on some complaint being made of their distressed situa-

tion, the young gentleman who had been admitted into their crew remarked, "Nay, we are not so badly off neither, we are not come to *eating* one another yet!"—Thus, whatever is the subject of discourse, the scene is revived in his mind, and every circumstance brought before you without affectation or effort, just as it happened. It might be called *picture-talking*. He has always some pat allusion or anecdote. A young engraver came into his room the other day, with a print which he had put into the crown of his hat, in order not to crumple it, and he said it had been nearly blown away several times in passing along the street. "You put me in mind," said Northcote, "of a bird-catcher at Plymouth, who used to put the birds he had caught into his hat to bring them home, and one day meeting my father in the road, he pulled off his hat to make him a low bow, and all the birds flew away!" Sometimes Mr. Northcote gets to the top of a ladder to paint a palm-tree or to finish a sky in one of his pictures; and in this situation he listens very attentively to any thing you tell him. I was once mentioning some strange inconsistencies of our modern poets; and on coming to one that exceeded the rest, he descended the steps of the

ladder one by one, laid his pallet and brushes deliberately on the ground, and coming up to me, said—"You don't say so, it's the very thing I should have supposed of them: yet these are the men that speak against Pope and Dryden." Never any sarcasms were so fine, so cutting, so careless as his. The grossest things from his lips seem an essence of refinement: the most refined became more so than ever. Hear him talk of Pope's Epistle to Jervas, and repeat the lines—

"Yet should the Graces all thy figures place,
And breathe an air divine on every face;
Yet should the Muses bid my numbers roll
Strong as their charms, and gentle as their soul,
With Zeuxis' Helen thy Bridgewater vie,
And these be sung till Granville's Myra die:
Alas! how little from the grave we claim;
Thou but preserv'st a face, and I a name."

Or let him speak of Boccacio and his story of Isabella and her pot of basil, in which she kept her lover's head and watered it with her tears, "and how it grew, and it grew, and it grew," and you see his own eyes glisten, and the leaves of the basil-tree tremble to his faltering accents!

Mr. Fuseli's conversation is more striking

and extravagant, but less pleasing and natural than Mr. Northcote's. He deals in paradoxes and caricatures. He talks allegories and personifications, as he paints them. You are sensible of effort without any repose—no careless pleasantry—no traits of character or touches from nature—every thing is laboured or overdone. His ideas are gnarled, hard, and distorted, like his features—his theories stalking and straddle-legged, like his gait—his projects aspiring and gigantic, like his gestures—his performance uncouth and dwarfish, like his person. His pictures are also like himself, with eye-balls of stone stuck in rims of tin, and muscles twisted together like ropes or wires. Yet Fuseli is undoubtedly a man of genius, and capable of the most wild and grotesque combinations of fancy. It is a pity that he ever applied himself to painting, which must always be reduced to the test of the senses. He is a little like Dante or Ariosto, perhaps; but no more like Michael Angelo, Raphael, or Correggio, than I am. Nature, he complains, puts him out. Yet he can laugh at artists who "paint ladies with iron lap-dogs;" and he describes the great masters of old in words or lines full of truth, and glancing from a pen or tongue of fire. I conceive any person would be more

struck with Mr. Fuseli at first sight, but would wish to visit Mr. Northcote oftener. There is a bold and startling outline in his style of talking, but not the delicate finishing or bland tone that there is in that of the latter. Whatever there is harsh or repulsive about him is, however, in a great degree carried off by his animated foreign accent and broken English, which give character where there is none, and soften its asperities where it is too abrupt and violent.

Compared to either of these artists, West (the late President of the Royal Academy) was a thoroughly mechanical and *common-place* person—a man "of no mark or likelihood." He too was small, thin, but with regular well-formed features, and a precise, sedate, self-satisfied air. This, in part, arose from the conviction in his own mind that he was the greatest painter (and consequently the greatest man) in the world: kings and nobles were common every-day folks, but there was but one West in the many-peopled globe. If there was any one individual with whom he was inclined to share the palm of undivided superiority, it was with Buonaparte. When Mr. West had painted a picture, he thought it was

perfect. He had no idea of any thing in the art but rules, and these he exactly conformed to; so that, according to his theory, what he did was quite right. He conceived of painting as a mechanical or scientific process, and had no more doubt of a face or a group in one of his high ideal compositions being what it ought to be, than a carpenter has that he has drawn a line straight with a ruler and a piece of chalk, or than a mathematician has that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones.

When Mr. West walked through his gallery, the result of fifty years' labour, he saw nothing, either on the right or the left, to be added or taken away. The account he gave of his own pictures, which might seem like ostentation or rhodomontade, had a sincere and infantine simplicity in it. When some one spoke of his *St. Paul shaking off the serpent from his arm*, (at Greenwich Hospital, I believe), he said, "A little burst of genius, sir!" West was one of those happy mortals who had not an idea of any thing beyond himself or his own actual powers and knowledge. I once heard him say in a public room, that he thought he had quite as good an idea of Athens from

reading the Travelling Catalogues of the place, as if he lived there for years. I believe this was strictly true, and that he would have come away with the same slender, literal, unenriched idea of it as he went. Looking at a picture of Rubens, which he had in his possession, he said with great indifference, "What a pity that this man wanted expression!" This natural self-complacency might be strengthened by collateral circumstances of birth and religion. West, as a native of America, might be supposed to own no superior in the Commonwealth of art: as a Quaker, he smiled with sectarian self-sufficiency at the objections that were made to his theory or practice in painting. He lived long in the firm persuasion of being one of the elect among the sons of Fame, and went to his final rest in the arms of Immortality! Happy error! Enviable old man!

Flaxman is another living and eminent artist, who is distinguished by success in his profession and by a prolonged and active old age. He is diminutive in person, like the others. I know little of him, but that he is an elegant sculptor, and a profound mystic. This last is a character common to many other artists in our days—Loutherbourg, Cosway, Blake, Sharp, Varley,

&c.—who seem to relieve the literalness of their professional studies by voluntary excursions into the regions of the preternatural, pass their time between sleeping and waking, and whose ideas are like a stormy night, with the clouds driven rapidly across, and the blue sky and stars gleaming between!

Cosway is the last of these I shall mention. At that name I pause, and must be excused if I consecrate to him a *petit souvenir* in my best manner; for he was Fancy's child. What a fairy palace was his of specimens of art, antiquarianism, and *virtù*, jumbled all together in the richest disorder, dusty, shadowy, obscure, with much left to the imagination, (how different from the finical, polished, petty, modernised air of some Collections we have seen!) and with copies of the old masters, cracked and damaged, which he touched and retouched with his own hand, and yet swore they were the genuine, the pure originals. All other collectors are fools to him: they go about with painful anxiety to find out the realities:—he *said* he had them—and in a moment made them of the breath of his nostrils and of the fumes of a lively imagination. His was the crucifix that Abelard prayed to—a lock of Eloisa's hair—the dagger with

which Felton stabbed the Duke of Buckingham —the first finished sketch of the Jocunda— Titian's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine— a mummy of an Egyptian king—a feather of a phœnix—a piece of Noah's Ark. Were the articles authentic? What matter?—his faith in them was true. He was gifted with a *second-sight* in such matters: he believed whatever was incredible. Fancy bore sway in him; and so vivid were his impressions, that they included the substances of things in them. The agreeable and the true with him were one. He believed in Swedenborgianism—he believed in animal magnetism—he had conversed with more than one person of the Trinity—he could talk with his lady at Mantua through some fine vehicle of sense, as we speak to a servant down-stairs through a conduit-pipe. Richard Cosway was not the man to flinch from an *ideal* proposition. Once, at an Academy dinner, when some question was made whether the story of Lambert's Leap was true, he started up, and said it was; for he was the person that performed it:—he once assured me that the knee-pan of King James I. in the ceiling at Whitehall was nine feet across (he had measured it in concert with Mr. Cipriani, who was repairing the figures)—

he could read in the Book of the Revelations without spectacles, and foretold the return of Buonaparte from Elba—and from St. Helena! His wife, the most lady-like of Englishwomen, being asked in Paris what sort of a man her husband was, made answer—"*Toujours riant, toujours gai.*" This was his character. He must have been of French extraction. His soul appeared to possess the life of a bird; and such was the jauntiness of his air and manner, that to see him sit to have his half-boots laced on, you would fancy (by the help of a figure) that, instead of a little withered elderly gentleman, it was Venus attired by the Graces. His miniatures and whole-length drawings were not merely fashionable—they were fashion itself. His imitations of Michael Angelo were not the thing. When more than ninety, he retired from his profession, and used to hold up the palsied hand that had painted lords and ladies for upwards of sixty years, and smiled, with unabated good-humour, at the vanity of human wishes. Take him with all his faults and follies, we scarce "shall look upon his like again!"

Why should such persons ever die? It seems hard upon them and us! Care fixes no sting in their hearts, and their persons "present no

mark to the foe-man." Death in them seizes upon living shadows. They scarce consume vital air: their gross functions are long at an end—they live but to paint, to talk or think. Is it that the vice of age, the miser's fault, gnaws them? Many of them are not afraid of death, but of coming to want; and having begun in poverty, are haunted with the idea that they shall end in it, and so die—*to save charges.* Otherwise, they might linger on for ever, and "defy augury!"

ESSAY X.

ON ENVY (A DIALOGUE).

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ON ENVY (A DIALOGUE)

H. I HAD a theory about Envy at one time, which I have partly given up of late—which was, that there was no such feeling; or that what is usually considered as envy or dislike of real merit is, more properly speaking, jealousy of false pretensions to it. I used to illustrate the argument by saying, that this was the reason we were not envious of the dead, because their merit was established beyond the reach of cavil or contradiction; whereas we are jealous and uneasy at sudden and upstart popularity, which wants the seal of time to confirm it, and which after all may turn out to be false and hollow. There is no danger that the testimony of ages should be reversed, and we add our suffrages to it with confidence, and even with enthusiasm. But we doubt reasonably enough, whether that which was applauded yesterday may not be condemned to-morrow; and are afraid of setting our names to a fraudulent claim

to distinction. However satisfied we may be in our own minds, we are not sufficiently borne out by general opinion and sympathy to prevent certain misgivings and scruples on the subject. No one thinks, for instance, of denying the merit of Teniers in his particular style of art, and no one consequently thinks of envying him. The merit of Wilkie, on the contrary, was at first strongly contested, and there were other painters set up in opposition to him, till now that he has become a sort of *classic* in his way, he has ceased to be an object of envy or dislike, because no one doubts his real excellence, as far as it goes. He has no more than justice done him, and the mind never revolts at justice. It only rejects false or superficial claims to admiration, and is incensed to see the world take up with appearances, when they have no solid foundation to support them. We are not envious of Rubens or Raphael, because their fame is a pledge of their genius: but if any one were to bring forward the highest living names as equal to these, it immediately sets the blood in a ferment, and we try to stifle the sense we have of their merits, not because they are new or modern, but because we are not sure they will ever be old. Could we be certain that posterity would sanction our award, we should grant

it without scruple, even to an enemy and a rival.

N. That which you describe is not envy. Envy is when you hate and would destroy all excellence that you do not yourself possess. So they say that Raphael, after he had copied the figures on one of the antique vases, endeavoured to deface them; and Hoppner, it has been said, used to get pictures of Sir Joshua's into his possession, on purpose to paint them over and spoil them.

H. I do not believe the first, certainly. Raphael was too great a man, and with too fortunate a temper, to need or to wish to prop himself up on the ruins of others. As to Hoppner, he might perhaps think that there was no good reason for the preference given to Sir Joshua's portraits over his own, that his women of quality were the more airy and fashionable of the two, and might be tempted (once perhaps) in a fit of spleen, of caprice or impatience, to blot what was an eye-sore to himself from its old-fashioned, faded, dingy look, and at the same time dazzled others from the force of tradition and prejudice. Why, he might argue, should that old fellow run away with all the popularity even among those who (as he well knew) in their hearts preferred his own insipid, flaunting style

to any other? Though it might be true that Sir Joshua was the greater painter, yet it was not true that Lords and Ladies thought so: he felt that he ought to be *their* favourite, and he might naturally hate what was continually *thrust in his dish*, and (as far as those about him were concerned) unjustly set over his head. Besides, Hoppner had very little of his own to rely on, and might wish, by destroying, to conceal the source from whence he had borrowed almost every thing.

N. Did you never feel envy?

H. Very little, I think. In truth, I am out of the way of it: for the only pretension, of which I am tenacious, is that of being a metaphysician; and there is so little attention paid to this subject to pamper one's vanity, and so little fear of losing that little from competition, that there is scarcely any room for envy here. One occupies the niche of eminence in which one places one's self, very quietly and contentedly! If I have ever felt this passion at all, it has been where some very paltry fellow has by trick and management contrived to obtain much more credit than he was entitled to. There was ————, to whom I had a perfect antipathy. He was the antithesis of a man of genius; and yet he did better, by mere dint

of dulness, than many men of genius. This was intolerable. There was something in the man and in his manner, with which you could not possibly connect the idea of admiration, or of any thing that was not merely mechanical—

"His look made the still air cold."

He repelled all sympathy and cordiality. What he did (though amounting only to mediocrity) was an insult on the understanding. It seemed that he should be able *to do nothing;* for he was nothing either in himself or in other people's idea of him! Mean actions or gross expressions too often unsettle one's theory of genius. We are unable as well as unwilling to connect the feeling of high intellect with low moral sentiment: the one is a kind of desecration of the other. I have for this reason been sometimes disposed to disparage Turner's fine landscapes, and be glad when he failed in his higher attempts, in order that my conception of the artist and his pictures might be more of a piece. This is not envy or an impatience of extraordinary merit, but an impatience of the incongruities in human nature, and of the drawbacks and stumbling-blocks in the way of our admiration of it. Who is there that admires the Author of Waverley more than I do? Who is there that de-

spises Sir W***** S**** more? I do not like to think there should be a second instance of the same person's being

"The wisest, meanest of mankind—"

and should be heartily glad if the greatest genius of the age should turn out to be an honest man. The only thing that renders this *mis-alliance* between first-rate intellect and want of principle endurable is that such an extreme instance of it teaches us that great moral lesson of moderating our expectations of human perfection, and enlarging our indulgence for human infirmity.

N. You start off with an idea as usual, and torture the plain state of the case into a paradox. There may be some truth in what you suppose; but malice or selfishness is at the bottom of the severity of your criticism, not the love of truth or justice, though you may make it the pretext. You are more angry at Sir W***** S****'s success than at his servility. You would give yourself no trouble about his poverty of spirit, if he had not made a hundred thousand pounds by his writings. The sting lies there, though you may try to conceal it from yourself.

H. I do not think so. I hate the sight of the Duke of W********* for his foolish face, as

much as for any thing else. I cannot believe that a great general is contained under such a paste-board vizor of a man. This, you'll say, is party-spite, and rage at his good-fortune. I deny it. I always liked Lord Castlereagh for the gallant spirit that shone through his appearance; and his fine bust surmounted and crushed fifty orders that glittered beneath it. Nature seemed to have meant him for something better than he was. But in the other instance, Fortune has evidently played Nature a trick,

"To throw a cruel sunshine on a fool."

N. The truth is, you were reconciled to Lord Castlereagh's face, and patronised his person, because you felt a sort of advantage over him in point of style. His blunders qualified his success; and you fancied you could take his speeches in pieces, whereas you could not undo the battles that the other had won.

H. So I have been accused of denying the merits of Pitt, from political dislike and prejudice: but who is there that has praised Burke more than I have? It is a subject I am never weary of, because I feel it.

N. You mean, because he is dead, and is now little talked of; and you think you show superior discernment and liberality by praising

him. If there was a *Burke-Club*, you would say nothing about him. You deceive yourself as to your own motives, and weave a wrong theory out of them for human nature. The love of distinction is the ruling passion of the human mind; we grudge whatever draws off attention from ourselves to others; and all our actions are but different contrivances, either by sheer malice or affected liberality, to keep it to ourselves or share it with others. Goldsmith was jealous even of beauty in the other sex. When the people at Amsterdam gathered round the balcony to look at the Miss Hornecks, he grew impatient, and said peevishly, "There are places where I also am admired." It may be said—What could their beauty have to do with his reputation? No: it could not tend to lessen it, but it drew admiration from himself to them. So Mr. C****r, the other day, when he was at the Academy dinner, made himself conspicuous by displaying the same feeling. He found fault with every thing, *damned* all the pictures—landscapes, portraits, busts, nothing pleased him; and not contented with this, he then fell foul of the art itself, which he treated as a piece of idle foolery, and said that Raphael had thrown away his time in doing what was not worth the trouble. This, besides being in-

sincere, was a great breach of good-manners, which none but a low-bred man would be guilty of; but he felt his own consequence annoyed; he saw a splendid exhibition of art, a splendid dinner set out, the Nobility, the Cabinet-Ministers, the branches of the Royal Family invited to it; the most eminent professors were there present; it was a triumph and a celebration of art, a dazzling proof of the height to which it had attained in this country, and of the esteem in which it was held. He felt that he played a very subordinate part in all this; and in order to relieve his own wounded vanity, he was determined (as he thought) to mortify that of others. He wanted to make himself of more importance than any body else, by trampling on Raphael and on the art itself. It was ridiculous and disgusting, because every one saw through the motive; so that he defeated his own object.

H. And he would have avoided this exposure, if with all his conceit and ill-humour, he had had the smallest taste for the art, or perception of the beauties of Raphael. He has just knowledge enough of drawing to make a whole-length sketch of Buonaparte, verging on caricature, yet not palpably outraging probability; so that it looked like a fat, stupid, *common-*

place man, or a flattering likeness of some legitimate monarch—he had skill, cunning, servility enough to do this with his own hand, and to circulate a print of it with zealous activity, as an indirect means of degrading him in appearance to that low level to which fortune had once raised him in reality. But the man who could do this deliberately, and with satisfaction to his own nature, was not the man to understand Raphael, and might slander him or any other, the greatest of earth's born, without injuring or belying any feeling of admiration or excellence in his own breast; for no such feeling had ever entered there.

N. Come, this is always the way. Now you are growing personal. Why do you so constantly let your temper get the better of your reason?

H. Because I hate a hypocrite, a time-server, and a slave. But to return to the question, and say no more about this "*talking potatoe**"—I do not think that, except in circumstances of peculiar aggravation, or of extraordinary ill-temper and moroseness of disposition, any one who has a thorough feeling of excellence has a delight

* Mr. C****r made his first appearance in this country as a hack-writer, and received this surname from the classic lips of Mr. Cumberland.

in gainsaying it. The excellence that we feel, we participate in as if it were our own—it becomes ours by transfusion of mind—it is instilled into our hearts—it mingles with our blood. We are unwilling to allow merit, because we are unable to perceive it. But to be convinced of it, is to be ready to acknowledge and pay homage to it. Illiberality or narrowness of feeling is a narrowness of taste, a want of proper *tact*. A bigotted and exclusive spirit is real blindness to all excellence but our own, or that of some particular school or sect. I think I can give an instance of this in some friends of mine, on whom you will be disposed to have no more mercy than I have on Mr. Croker—I mean the *Lake School*. Their system of Ostracism is not unnatural: it begins only with the natural limits of their tastes and feelings. Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. Southey have no feeling for the excellence of Pope, or Goldsmith, or Gray—they do not enter at all into their merits, and on that account it is that they deny, proscribe, and envy them. *Incredulus odi*, is the explanation here, and in all such cases. I am satisfied that the fine turn of thought in Pope, the gliding verse of Goldsmith, the brilliant diction of Gray have no charms for the Author of the Lyrical Ballads:

he has no faculty in his mind to which these qualities of poetry address themselves. It is not an oppressive, galling sense of them, and a burning envy to rival them, and shame that he cannot—he would not, if he could. He has no more ambition to write couplets like Pope, than to turn a barrel-organ. He has no pleasure in such poetry, and therefore he has no patience with others that have. The enthusiasm that they feel and express on the subject seems an effect without a cause, and puzzles and provokes the mind accordingly. Mr. Wordsworth, in particular, is narrower in his tastes than other people, because he sees every thing from a single and original point of view. Whatever does not fall in strictly with this, he accounts no better than a delusion, or a play upon words.

N. You mistake the matter altogether. The acting principle in their minds is an inveterate selfishness or desire of distinction. They see that a particular kind of excellence has been carried to its height—a height that they have no hope of arriving at—the road is stopped up; they must therefore strike into a different path; and in order to divert the public mind and draw attention to themselves, they affect to decry the old models, and overturn what they cannot rival. They know they cannot write

like Pope or Dryden, or would be only imitators if they did; and they consequently strive to gain an original and equal celebrity by singularity and affectation. Their simplicity is not natural to them: it is the *forlorn-hope* of impotent and disappointed vanity.

H. I cannot think that. It may be so in part, but not principally or altogether. Their minds are cast in a peculiar mould, and they cannot produce nor receive any other impressions than those which they do. They are, as to matters of taste, *très bornés*.

N. You make them out stupider than I thought. I have sometimes spoken disrespectfully of their talents, and so I think, comparatively with those of some of our standard writers. But I certainly should never conceive them so lost to common sense, as not to perceive the beauty, or splendour, or strength of Pope and Dryden. They are dazzled by it, and wilfully shut their eyes to it, and try to throw dust in those of other people. We easily discern and are confounded by excellence, which we are conscious we should in vain attempt to equal. We may see that another is taller than ourselves, and yet we may know that we can never grow to his stature. A dwarf may easily envy a giant.

H. They would like the comparison to Polyphemus in "Acis and Galatea" better. They think that little men have run away with the prize of beauty.

N. No one admires poetry more than I do, or sees more beauties in it; though if I were to try for a thousand years, I should never be able to do any thing to please myself.

H. Perhaps not in the mechanical part; but still you admire and are most struck with those passages in poetry, that accord with the previous train of your own feelings, and give you back the images of your own mind. There is something congenial in taste, at least, between ourselves and those whom we admire. I do not think there is any point of sympathy between Pope and the *Lake School:* on the contrary, I know there is an antipathy between them.—When you speak of Titian, you look like him. I can understand how it is that you talk so well on that subject, and that your discourse has an extreme-unction about it, a marrowiness like his colouring. But I do not believe that the late Mr. West had the least notion of Titian's peculiar excellences—he would think one of his own copies of him as good as the original, and his own historical compositions much better. He would therefore, I conceive,

sit and listen to a conversation in praise of him with something like impatience, and think it an interruption to more important discussions on the principles of high art. But if Mr. West had ever seen in nature what there is to be found in Titian's copies from it, he would never have thought of such a comparison, and would have bowed his head in deep humility at the very mention of his name. He might not have been able to do like him, and yet might have seen nature with the same eyes.

N. We do not always admire most what we can do best; but often the contrary. Sir Joshua's admiration of Michael Angelo was perfectly sincere and unaffected; but yet nothing could be more diametrically opposite than the minds of the two men—there was an absolute gulph between them. It was the consciousness of his own inability to execute such works, that made him more sensible of the difficulty and the merit. It was the same with his fondness for Poussin. He was always exceedingly angry with me for not admiring him enough. But this showed his good sense and modesty. Sir Joshua was always on the *look-out* for whatever might enlarge his notions on the subject of his art, and supply his defects; and did not, like some artists, measure all possible excel-

lence by his own actual deficiencies. He thus improved and learned something daily. Others have lost their way by setting out with a pragmatical notion of their own self-sufficiency, and have never advanced a single step beyond their first crude conceptions. Fuseli was to blame in this respect. He did not want capacity or enthusiasm, but he had an over-weening opinion of his own peculiar acquirements. Speaking of Vandyke, he said he would not go across the way to see the finest portrait he had ever painted. He asked—"What is it but a little bit of colour?" Sir Joshua said, on hearing this—"Aye, he'll live to repent it." And he has lived to repent it. With that little bit added to his own heap, he would have been a much greater painter, and a happier man.

H. Yes: but I doubt whether he could have added it in practice. I think the indifference, in the first instance, arises from the want of taste and capacity. If Fuseli had possessed an eye for colour, he would not have despised it in Vandyke. But we reduce others to the limits of our own capacity. We think little of what we cannot do, and envy it where we imagine that it meets with disproportioned admiration from others. A dull, pompous, and obscure writer has been heard to exclaim, "That *dunce*,

Wordsworth!" This was excusable in one who is utterly without feeling for any objects in nature, but those which would make splendid furniture for a drawing-room, or any sentiment of the human heart, but that with which a slave looks up to a despot, or a despot looks down upon a slave. This contemptuous expression was an effusion of spleen and impatience at the idea that there should be any one who preferred Wordsworth's descriptions of a daisy or a linnet's nest to his *auctioneer*-poetry about curtains, and palls, and sceptres, and precious stones: but had Wordsworth, in addition to his original sin of simplicity and true genius, been a popular writer, his contempt would have turned into hatred. As it is, he tolerates his *idle nonsense:* there is a link of friendship in mutual political servility; and besides, he has a fellow-feeling with him, as one of those writers of whose merits the world have not been fully sensible. Mr. Croley set out with high pretensions, and had some idea of rivalling Lord Byron in a certain lofty, imposing style of versification: but he is probably by this time convinced that mere constitutional *hauteur* as ill supplies the place of elevation of genius, as of the pride of birth; and that the public know how to distinguish between a string of gaudy,

painted, turgid phrases, and the vivid creations of fancy, or touching delineations of the human heart.

N. What did you say the writer's name was?

H. Croley. He is one of the Royal Society of Authors.

N. I never heard of him. Is he an imitator of Lord Byron, did you say?

H. I am afraid neither he nor Lord Byron would have it thought so.

N. Such imitators do all the mischief, and bring real genius into disrepute. This is in some measure an excuse for those who have endeavoured to disparage Pope and Dryden. We have had a surfeit of imitations of them. Poetry, in the hands of a set of mechanic scribblers, had become such a tame, mawkish thing, that we could endure it no longer, and our impatience of the abuse of a good thing transferred itself to the original source. It was this which enabled Wordsworth and the rest to raise up a new school (or to attempt it) on the ruins of Pope; because a race of writers had succeeded him without one particle of his wit, sense, and delicacy, and the world were tired of their everlasting *sing-song* and *namby-pamby*. People were disgusted at hearing the faults of Pope (the part most easily

imitated) cried up as his greatest excellence, and were willing to take refuge from such nauseous cant in any novelty.

H. What you now observe comes nearly to my account of the matter. Sir Andrew Wylie will sicken people of the Author of Waverley. It was but the other day that some one was proposing that there should be a Society formed for not reading the Scotch Novels. But it is not the excellence of that fine writer that we are tired of, or revolt at, but vapid imitations or catch-penny repetitions of himself. Even the quantity of them has an obvious tendency to lead to this effect. It lessens, instead of increasing our admiration: for it seems to be an evidence that there is no difficulty in the task, and leads us to suspect something like trick or deception in their production. We have not been used to look upon works of genius as of the *fungus* tribe. Yet these are so. We had rather doubt our own taste than ascribe such a superiority of genius to another, that it works without consciousness or effort, executes the labour of a life in a few weeks, writes faster than the public can read, and scatters the rich materials of thought and feeling like so much chaff.

N. Aye, there it is. We had rather do any thing than acknowledge the merit of another, if we have any possible excuse or evasion to help it. Depend upon it, you are glad Sir Walter Scott is a Tory—because it gives you an opportunity of qualifying your involuntary admiration of him. You would be sorry indeed if he were what you call an *honest man!* Envy is like a viper coiled up at the bottom of the heart, ready to spring upon and poison whatever approaches it. We live upon the vices, the imperfections, the misfortunes, and disappointments of others, as our natural food. We cannot bear a superior or an equal. Even our pretended cordial admiration is only a subterfuge of our vanity. By raising one, we proportionably lower and mortify others. Our self-love may perhaps be taken by surprise and thrown off its guard by novelty; but it soon recovers itself, and begins to cool in its warmest expressions, and find every possible fault. Ridicule, for this reason, is sure to prevail over truth, because the malice of mankind thrown into the scale gives the casting-weight. We have one succession of authors, of painters, of favourites, after another, whom we hail in their turns, because they operate as a diversion to one another,

and relieve us of the galling sense of the superiority of any one individual for any length of time. By changing the object of our admiration, we secretly persuade ourselves that there is no such thing as excellence. It is that which we hate above all things. It is the worm that gnaws us, that never dies. The mob shout when a king or a conqueror appears: they would take him and tear him in pieces, but that he is the scape-goat of their pride and vanity, and makes all other men appear like a herd of slaves and cowards. Instead of a thousand equals, we compound for one superior, and allay all heart-burnings and animosities among ourselves, by giving the palm to *the least worthy*. This is the secret of monarchy.—Loyalty is not the love of kings, but hatred and jealousy of mankind. A lacquey rides behind his lord's coach, and feels no envy of his master. Why? because he looks down and laughs, in his borrowed finery, at the ragged rabble below. Is it not so in our profession? What Academician eats his dinner in peace, if a rival sits near him; if his own are not the most admired pictures in the room; or, in that case, if there are any others that are at all admired, and divide distinction with him? Is not every artifice used to place the pictures of

other artists in the worst light? Do they not go there after their performances are hung up, and try to *paint one another out?* What is the case among players? Does not a favourite actor threaten to leave the stage, as soon as a new candidate for public favour is taken the least notice of? Would not a Manager of a theatre (who has himself pretensions) sooner see it burnt down, than that it should be saved from ruin and lifted into the full tide of public prosperity and favour, by the efforts of one whom he conceives to have supplanted himself in the popular opinion? Do we not see an author, who has had a tragedy damned, sit at the play every night of a new performance for years after, in the hopes of gaining a new companion in defeat? Is it not an indelible offence to a picture-collector and patron of the arts, to hint that another has a fine head in his collection? Will any merchant in the city allow another to be worth a *plum?* What wit will applaud a *bon mot* by a rival? He sits uneasy and out of countenance, till he has made another, which he thinks will make the company forget the first. Do women ever allow beauty in others? Observe the people in a country-town, and see how they look at those who are better dressed than themselves; listen to the

talk in country-places, and mind if it is composed of any thing but slanders, gossip, and lies.

H. But don't you yourself admire Sir Joshua Reynolds?

N. Why, yes: I think I have no envy myself, and yet I have sometimes caught myself at it. I don't know that I do not admire Sir Joshua merely as a screen against the reputation of bad pictures.

H. Then, at any rate, what I say is true: we envy the good less than we do the bad.

N. I do not think so; and am not sure that Sir Joshua himself did not admire Michael Angelo to get rid of the superiority of Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt, which pressed closer on him, and "galled his kibe more."

H. I should not think that at all unlikely; for I look upon Sir Joshua as rather a spiteful man, and always thought he could have little real feeling for the works of Michael Angelo or Raphael, which he extolled so highly, or he would not have been insensible to their effect the first time he ever beheld them.

N. He liked Sir Peter Lely better.

ESSAY XI.

ON SITTING FOR ONE'S PICTURE.

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THERE is a pleasure in sitting for one's picture, which many persons are not aware of. People are coy on this subject at first, coquet with it, and pretend not to like it, as is the case with other venial indulgences, but they soon get over their scruples, and become resigned to their fate. There is a conscious vanity in it; and vanity is the *aurum potabile* in all our pleasures, the true *elixir* of human life. The sitter at first affects an air of indifference, throws himself into a slovenly or awkward position, like a clown when he goes a courting for the first time, but gradually recovers himself, attempts an attitude, and calls up his best looks, the moment he receives intimation that there is something about him that will do for a picture. The beggar in the street is proud to have his picture painted, and would almost sit for nothing: the finest lady in the land is as fond of sitting to a favourite artist as of seating herself before her looking-glass; and

the more so, as the glass in this case is sensible of her charms, and does all it can to fix or heighten them. Kings lay aside their crowns to sit for their portraits, and poets their laurels to sit for their busts! I am sure, my father had as little vanity, and as little love for the art as most persons: yet when he had sat to me a few times (now some twenty years ago), he grew evidently uneasy when it was a fine day, that is, when the sun shone into the room, so that we could not paint; and when it became cloudy, began to bustle about, and ask me if I was not getting ready. Poor old room! Does the sun still shine into thee, or does Hope fling its colours round thy walls, gaudier than the rainbow? No, never, while thy oak-pannels endure, will they inclose such fine movements of the brain as passed through mine, when the fresh hues of nature gleamed from the canvas, and my heart silently breathed the names of Rembrandt and Correggio! Between my father's love of sitting and mine of painting, we hit upon a tolerable likeness at last; but the picture is cracked and gone; and *Megilp* (that bane of the English school) has destroyed as fine an old Nonconformist head as one could hope to see in these degenerate times.

The fact is, that the having one's picture

painted is like the creation of another self; and that is an idea, of the repetition or reduplication of which no man is ever tired, to the thousandth reflection. It has been said that lovers are never tired of each other's company, because they are always talking of themselves. This seems to be the bond of connexion (a delicate one it is!) between the painter and the sitter—they are always thinking and talking of the same thing, the picture, in which their self-love finds an equal counter-part. There is always something to be done or to be altered, that touches that sensitive chord—this feature was not exactly hit off, something is wanting to the nose or to the eye-brows, it may perhaps be as well to leave out this mark or that blemish, if it were possible to recal an expression that was remarked a short time before, it would be an indescribable advantage to the picture—a squint or a pimple on the face handsomely avoided may be a link of attachment ever after. He is no mean friend who conceals from ourselves, or only gently indicates, our obvious defects to the world. The sitter, by his repeated, minute, *fidgetty* inquiries about himself may be supposed to take an indirect and laudable method of arriving at self-knowledge; and the artist, in self-defence, is obliged to cultivate a scrupulous tenderness to-

wards the feelings of his sitter, lest he should appear in the character of a spy upon him. I do not conceive there is a stronger call upon secret gratitude than the having made a favourable likeness of any one; nor a surer ground of jealousy and dislike than the having failed in the attempt. A satire or a lampoon in writing is bad enough; but here we look doubly foolish, for we are ourselves parties to the plot, and have been at considerable pains to give evidence against ourselves. I have never had a plaster cast taken of myself: in truth, I rather shrink from the experiment; for I know I should be very much mortified if it did not turn out well, and should never forgive the unfortunate artist who had lent his assistance to prove that I looked like a blockhead!

The late Mr. Opie used to remark that the most sensible people made the best sitters; and I incline to his opinion, especially as I myself am an excellent sitter. Indeed, it seems to me a piece of mere impertinence not to sit as still as one can in these circumstances. I put the best face I can upon the matter, as well out of respect to the artist as to myself. I appear on my trial in the court of physiognomy, and am as anxious to make good a certain idea I have of myself, as if I were playing a part on a stage. I

have no notion, how people go to sleep, who are sitting for their pictures. It is an evident sign of want of thought and of internal resources. There are some individuals, all whose ideas are in their hands and feet—make them sit still, and you put a stop to the machine altogether. The volatile spirit of quicksilver in them turns to a *caput mortuum.* Children are particularly sensible of this constraint from their thoughtlessness and liveliness. It is the next thing with them to wearing the fool's cap at school: yet they are proud of having their pictures taken, ask when they are to sit again, and are mightily pleased when they are done. Charles the First's children seem to have been good sitters, and the great dog sits like a Lord Chancellor.

The second time a person sits, and the view of the features is determined, the head seems fastened in an imaginary *vice*, and he can hardly tell what to make of his situation. He is continually overstepping the bounds of duty, and is tied down to certain lines and limits chalked out upon the canvas, to him "invisible or dimly seen" on the throne where he is exalted. The painter has now a difficult task to manage—to throw in his gentle admonitions, "A little more this way, sir," or "You bend rather too forward, madam,"—and ought to have a delicate

white hand, that he may venture to adjust a straggling lock of hair, or by giving a slight turn to the head, co-operate in the practical attainment of a position. These are the ticklish and tiresome places of the work, before much progress is made, where the sitter grows peevish and abstracted, and the painter more anxious and particular than he was the day before. Now is the time to fling in a few adroit compliments, or to introduce general topics of conversation. The artist ought to be a well-informed and agreeable man—able to expatiate on his art, and abounding in lively and characteristic anecdotes. Yet he ought not to talk too much, or to grow too animated; or the picture is apt to stand still, and the sitter to be aware of it. Accordingly, the best talkers in the profession have not always been the most successful portrait-painters. For this purpose it is desirable to bring a friend, who may relieve guard, or fill up the pauses of conversation, occasioned by the necessary attention of the painter to his business, and by the involuntary reveries of the sitter on what his own likeness will bring forth; or a book, a newspaper, or a port-folio of prints may serve to amuse the time. When the sitter's face begins to flag, the artist may then properly start a fresh topic of discourse, and while his

attention is fixed on the graces called out by the varying interest of the subject, and the model anticipates, pleased and smiling, their being transferred every moment to the canvas, nothing is wanting to improve and carry to its height the amicable understanding and mutual satisfaction and good-will subsisting between these two persons, so happily occupied with each other!

Sir Joshua must have had a fine time of it with his sitters. Lords, ladies, generals, authors, opera-singers, musicians, the learned and the polite, besieged his doors, and found an unfailing welcome. What a rustling of silks! What a fluttering of flounces and brocades! What a cloud of powder and perfumes! What a flow of periwigs! What an exchange of civilities and of titles! What a recognition of old friendships, and an introduction of new acquaintance and sitters! It must, I think, be allowed that this is the only mode in which genius can form a legitimate union with wealth and fashion. There is a secret and sufficient tie in interest and vanity. Abstract topics of wit or learning do not furnish a connecting link: but the painter, the sculptor, come in close contact with the persons of the Great. The lady of quality, the courtier, and the artist, meet and shake hands

on this common ground; the latter exercises a sort of natural jurisdiction and dictatorial power over the pretensions of the first to external beauty and accomplishment, which produces a mild sense and tone of equality; and the opulent sitter pays the taker of flattering likenesses handsomely for his trouble, which does not lessen the sympathy between them. There is even a satisfaction in paying down a high price for a picture—it seems as if one's head was worth something!—During the first sitting, Sir Joshua did little but chat with the new candidate for the fame of portraiture, try an attitude, or remark an expression. His object was to gain time, by not being in haste to commit himself, until he was master of the subject before him. No one ever dropped in but the friends and acquaintance of the sitter—it was a rule with Sir Joshua that from the moment the latter entered, he was at home—the room belonged to him—but what secret whisperings would there be among these, what confidential, inaudible communications! It must be a refreshing moment, when the cake and wine had been handed round, and the artist began again. He, as it were, by this act of hospitality assumed a new character, and acquired a double claim to confidence and respect. In the mean time, the sitter would perhaps

glance his eye round the room, and see a Titian or a Vandyke hanging in one corner, with a transient feeling of scepticism whether he should make such a picture. How the ladies of quality and fashion must bless themselves from being made to look like Dr. Johnson or Goldsmith! How proud the first of these would be, how happy the last, to fill the same arm-chair where the Bunburys and the Hornecks had sat! How superior the painter would feel to them all! By "happy alchemy of mind," he brought out all their good qualities and reconciled their defects, gave an air of studious ease to his learned friends, or lighted up the face of folly and fashion with intelligence and graceful smiles. Those portraits, however, that were most admired at the time, do not retain their pre-eminence now: the thought remains upon the brow, while the colour has faded from the cheek, or the dress grown obsolete; and after all, Sir Joshua's best pictures are those of his worst sitters—*his Children*. They suited best with his unfinished style; and are like the infancy of the art itself, happy, bold, and careless. Sir Joshua formed the circle of his private friends from the *elite* of his sitters; and Vandyke was, it appears, on the same footing with his. When any of those noble or distinguished persons

whom he has immortalised with his pencil, were sitting to him, he used to ask them to dinner, and afterwards it was their custom to return to the picture again, so that it is said that many of his finest portraits were done in this manner, ere the colours were yet dry, in the course of a single day. Oh! ephemeral works to last for ever!

Vandyke married a daughter of Earl Cowper, of whom there is a very beautiful picture. She was the Œnone, and he his own Paris. A painter of the name of Astley married a Lady ———, who sat to him for her picture. He was a wretched hand, but a fine person of a man, and a great coxcomb; and on his strutting up and down before the portrait when it was done with a prodigious air of satisfaction, she observed, "If he was so pleased with the copy, he might have the original." This Astley was a person of magnificent habits and a sumptuous taste in living; and is the same of whom the anecdote is recorded, that when some English students walking out near Rome were compelled by the heat to strip off their coats, Astley displayed a waistcoat with a huge waterfall streaming down the back of it, which was a piece of one of his own canvases that he had converted to this purpose. Sir Joshua fell in love with one of

his fair sitters, a young and beautiful girl, who ran out one day in a great panic and confusion, hid her face in her companion's lap who was reading in an outer room, and said, "Sir Joshua had made her an offer!" This circumstance perhaps deserves mentioning the more, because there is a general idea that Sir Joshua Reynolds was a confirmed old bachelor. Goldsmith conceived a fruitless attachment to the same person, and addressed some passionate letters to her. Alas! it is the fate of genius to admire and to celebrate beauty, not to enjoy it! It is a fate, perhaps not without its compensations—

> "Had Petrarch gained his Laura for a wife,
> Would he have written Sonnets all his life?"

This distinguished beauty is still living, and handsomer than Sir Joshua's picture of her when a girl; and inveighs against the freedom of Lord Byron's pen with all the charming prudery of the last age*.

* Sir Joshua may be thought to have studied the composition of his female portraits very coolly. There is a picture of his remaining of a Mrs. Symmons, who appears to have been a delicate beauty, pale, with a very little colour in her cheeks: but then to set off this want of complexion, she is painted in a snow-white satin dress, there is a white marble pillar near her, a white cloud over her head, and by her side stands one white lily.

The relation between the portrait-painter and his amiable sitters is one of established custom: but it is also one of metaphysical nicety, and is a running *double entendre*. The fixing an inquisitive gaze on beauty, the heightening a momentary grace, the dwelling on the heaven of an eye, the losing one's-self in the dimple of a chin, is a dangerous employment. The painter may chance to slide into the lover—the lover can hardly turn painter. The eye indeed grows critical, the hand is busy: but are the senses unmoved? We are employed to transfer living charms to an inanimate surface; but they may sink into the heart by the way, and the nerveless hand be unable to carry its luscious burthen any further. St. Preux wonders at the rash mortal who had dared to trace the features of his Julia; and accuses him of insensibility without reason. Perhaps he too had an enthusiasm and pleasures of his own! Mr. Burke, in his *Sublime and Beautiful*, has left a description of what he terms the most beautiful object in nature, the neck of a lovely and innocent female, which is written very much as if he had himself formerly painted this object, and sacrificed at this formidable shrine. There is no doubt that the perception of beauty becomes more exquisite ("till the sense aches at it") by being studied and refined upon as an object of art—it is

at the same time fortunately neutralised by this means, or the painter would run mad. It is converted into an abstraction, an *ideal* thing, into something intermediate between nature and art, hovering between a living substance and a senseless shadow. The health and spirit that but now breathed from a speaking face, the next moment breathe with almost equal effect from a dull piece of canvas, and thus distract attention: the eye sparkles, the lips are moist there too; and if we can fancy the picture alive, the face in its turn fades into a picture, a mere object of sight. We take rapturous possession with one sense, the eye; but the artist's pencil acts as a non-conductor to the grosser desires. Besides, the sense of duty, of propriety interferes. It is not the question at issue: we have other work on our hands, and enough to do. Love is the product of ease and idleness: but the painter has an anxious, feverish, never-ending task, to rival the beauty, to which he dare not aspire even in thought, or in a dream of bliss. Paints and brushes are not "amorous toys of light-winged Cupid;" a rising sigh evaporates in the aroma of some fine oil-colour or varnish, a kindling blush is transfixed in a bed of vermilion on the palette. A blue vein meandering in a white wrist invites

the hand to touch it: but it is better to proceed, and not spoil the picture. The ambiguity becomes more striking in painting from the naked figure. If the wonder occasioned by the object is greater, so is the despair of rivalling what we see. The sense of responsibility increases with the hope of creating an artificial splendour to match the real one. The display of unexpected charms foils our vanity, and mortifies passion. The painting *A Diana and Nymphs* is like plunging into a cold bath of desire: to make a statue of a *Venus* transforms the sculptor himself to stone. The snow on the lap of beauty freezes the soul. The heedless, unsuspecting licence of foreign manners gives the artist abroad an advantage over ours at home. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted only the head of Iphigene from a beautiful woman of quality: Canova had innocent girls to sit to him for his Graces. The Princess Borghese, whose symmetry of form was admirable, sat to him for a model, which he considered as his master-piece and the perfection of the female form; and when asked if she did not feel uncomfortable while it was taking, she replied with great indifference, "No: it was not cold!" I have but one other word to add on this part of the subject: if having to paint a delicate and modest

female is a temptation to gallantry, on the other hand the sitting to a lady for one's picture is a still more trying situation, and amounts (almost of itself) to a declaration of love!

Landscape-painting is free from these tormenting dilemmas and embarrassments. It is as full of the feeling of pastoral simplicity and ease, as portrait-painting is of personal vanity and egotism. Away then with those incumbrances to the true liberty of thought—the sitter's chair, the bag-wig and sword, the drapery, the lay figure—and let us to some retired spot in the country, take out our port-folio, plant our easel, and begin. We are all at once shrouded from observation—

> "The world forgetting, by the world forgot!"

We enjoy the cool shade, with solitude and silence; or hear the dashing waterfall,

> "Or stock-dove plain amid the forest deep,
> That drowsy rustles to the sighing gale."

It seems almost a shame to do any thing, we are so well content without it; but the eye is restless, and we must have something to show when we get home. We set to work, and failure

or success prompts us to go on. We take up the pencil, or lay it down again, as we please. We muse or paint, as objects strike our senses or our reflection. The perfect leisure we feel turns labour to a luxury. We try to imitate the grey colour of a rock or of the bark of a tree: the breeze wafted from its broad foliage gives us fresh spirits to proceed, we dip our pencil in the sky, or ask the white clouds sailing over its bosom to sit for their pictures. We are in no hurry, and have the day before us. Or else, escaping from the close-embowered scene, we catch fading distances on airy downs, and seize on golden sunsets with the fleecy flocks glittering in the evening ray, after a shower of rain has fallen. Or from Norwood's ridgy heights, survey the snake-like Thames, or its smoke-crowned capital;

> "Think of its crimes, its cares, its pain,
> Then shield us in the woods again."

No one thinks of disturbing a landscape-painter at his task: he seems a kind of magician, the privileged genius of the place. Wherever a Claude, a Wilson has introduced his own portrait in the foreground of a picture, we look at it with interest (however ill it may be done)

feeling that it is the portrait of one who was quite happy at the time, and how glad we should be to change places with him.

Mr. Burke has brought in a striking episode in one of his later works in allusion to Sir Joshua's portrait of Lord Keppel, with those of some other friends, painted in their better days. The portrait is indeed a fine one, worthy of the artist and the critic, and perhaps recalls Lord Keppel's memory oftener than any other circumstance at present does*. Portrait-painting is in truth a

* "No man lives too long, who lives to do with spirit, and suffer with resignation, what Providence pleases to command or inflict: but indeed they are sharp incommodities which beset old age. It was but the other day, that in putting in order some things which had been brought here on my taking leave of London for ever, I looked over a number of fine portraits, most of them of persons now dead, but whose society, in my better days, made this a proud and happy place. Amongst these was the picture of Lord Keppel. It was painted by an artist worthy of the subject, the excellent friend of that excellent man from their earliest youth, and a common friend of us both, with whom we lived for many years without a moment of coldness, of peevishness, of jealousy, or of jar, to the day of our final separation.

"I ever looked on Lord Keppel as one of the greatest and best men of his age; and I loved and cultivated him accordingly. He was much in my heart, and I believe I was in his to the very last beat. It was after his trial at Portsmouth that he gave me this picture. With what zeal and anxious

sort of cement of friendship, and a clue to history. That blockhead, Mr. C****r, of the Admiralty, the other day blundered upon some observations of mine relating to this subject, and made the House stare by asserting that portrait-painting was history or history portrait, as it happened; but went on to add, "That those gentlemen who had seen the ancient por-

affection I attended him through that his agony of glory; what part, my son, in early flush and enthusiasm of his virtue and the pious passion with which he attached himself to all my connexions, with what prodigality we both squandered ourselves in courting almost every sort of enmity for his sake, I believe he felt, just as I should have felt, such friendship on such an occasion."—*Letter to a Noble Lord*, p. 29, *second edition, printed for T. Williams.*

I have given this passage entire here, because I wish to be informed, if I could, what is the construction of the last sentence of it. It has puzzled me all my life. One difficulty might be got over by making a pause after "I believe he felt," and leaving out the comma between "have felt" and "such friendship." That is, the meaning would be, "I believe he felt with what zeal and anxious affection," &c. "just as I should have felt such friendship on such an occasion." But then again, what is to become of the "what part, my son?" &c. With what does this connect, or to what verb is "my son" the nominative case, or by what verb is "what part" governed? I should really be glad, if, from any manuscript, printed copy, or marginal correction, this point could be cleared up, and so fine a passage resolved, by any possible ellipsis, into ordinary grammar.

traits lately exhibited in Pall-mall, must have been satisfied that they were strictly *historical;*" which showed that he knew nothing at all of the matter, and merely talked by rote. There was nothing historical in the generality of those portraits, except that they were portraits of people mentioned in history—there was no more of the spirit of history in them (which is *passion* or *action*) than in their dresses. But this is the way in which that person, by his pettifogging habits and literal understanding, always mistakes a verbal truism for sense, and a misnomer for wit! I was going to observe, that I think the aiding the recollection of our family and friends in our absence may be a frequent and strong inducement to sitting for our pictures; but that I believe the love of posthumous fame, or of continuing our memories after we are dead, has very little to do with it. And one reason I should give for that opinion is this, that we are not naturally very prone to dwell with pleasure on any thing that may happen in relation to us after we are dead, because we are not fond of thinking of death at all. We shrink equally from the prospect of that fatal event or from any speculation on its consequences. The surviving ourselves in our pictures is but a poor compensation—it is rather

adding mockery to calamity. The perpetuating our names in the wide page of history or to a remote posterity is a vague calculation, that may take out the immediate sting of mortality—whereas we ourselves may hope to last (by a fortunate extension of the term of human life) almost as long as an ordinary portrait; and the wounds of lacerated friendship it heals must be still green, and our ashes scarcely cold. I think therefore that the looking forward to this mode of keeping alive the memory of what we were by lifeless hues and discoloured features, is not among the most approved consolations of human life, or favourite dalliances of the imagination. Yet I own I should like some part of me, as the hair or even nails, to be preserved entire, or I should have no objection to lie like Whitfield in a state of petrifaction. This smacks of the bodily reality at least—acts like a deception to the spectator, and breaks the fall from this "warm, kneaded motion to a clod"—from that to nothing—even to the person himself. I suspect that the idea of posthumous fame, which has so unwelcome a condition annexed to it, loses its general relish as we advance in life, and that it is only while we are young that we pamper our imaginations with this bait, with a sort of impunity. The reversion of immortality

is then so distant, that we may talk of it without much fear of entering upon immediate possession: death is itself a fable—a sound that dies upon our lips; and the only certainty seems the only impossibility. Fame, at that romantic period, is the first thing in our mouths, and death the last in our thoughts.

ESSAY XII.

WHETHER GENIUS IS CONSCIOUS OF ITS POWERS?

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No really great man ever thought himself so. The idea of greatness in the mind answers but ill to our knowledge—or to our ignorance of ourselves. What living prose-writer, for instance, would think of comparing himself with Burke? Yet would it not have been equal presumption or egotism in him to fancy himself equal to those who had gone before him—Bolingbroke or Johnson or Sir William Temple? Because his rank in letters is become a settled point with us, we conclude that it must have been quite as self-evident to him, and that he must have been perfectly conscious of his vast superiority to the rest of the world. Alas! not so. No man is truly himself, but in the idea which others entertain of him. The mind, as well as the eye, "sees not itself, but by reflection from some other thing." What parity can there be between the effect of habitual composition on

the mind of the individual, and the surprise occasioned by first reading a fine passage in an admired author; between what we do with ease, and what we thought it next to impossible ever to be done; between the reverential awe we have for years encouraged, without seeing reason to alter it, for distinguished genius, and the slow, reluctant, unwelcome conviction that after infinite toil and repeated disappointments, and when it is too late and to little purpose, we have ourselves at length accomplished what we at first proposed; between the insignificance of our petty, personal pretensions, and the vastness and splendour which the atmosphere of imagination lends to an illustrious name? He who comes up to his own idea of greatness, must always have had a very low standard of it in his mind. "What a pity," said some one, "that Milton had not the pleasure of reading Paradise Lost!" He could not read it, as we do, with the weight of impression that a hundred years of admiration have added to it—"a phœnix gazed by all"—with the sense of the number of editions it has passed through with still increasing reputation, with the tone of solidity, time-proof, which it has received from the breath of cold, envious maligners, with the sound which the voice of Fame has lent to

every line of it! The writer of an ephemeral production may be as much dazzled with it as the public: it may sparkle in his own eyes for a moment, and be soon forgotten by every one else. But no one can anticipate the suffrages of posterity. Every man, in judging of himself, is his own contemporary. He may feel the gale of popularity, but he cannot tell how long it will last. His opinion of himself wants distance, wants time, wants numbers, to set it off and confirm it. He must be indifferent to his own merits, before he can feel a confidence in them. Besides, every one must be sensible of a thousand weaknesses and deficiencies in himself; whereas Genius only leaves behind it the monuments of its strength. A great name is an abstraction of some one excellence: but whoever fancies himself an abstraction of excellence, so far from being great, may be sure that he is a blockhead, equally ignorant of excellence or defect, of himself or others. Mr. Burke, besides being the author of the *Reflections*, and the *Letter to a Noble Lord*, had a wife and son; and had to think as much about them as we do about him. The imagination gains nothing by the minute details of personal knowledge.

On the other hand, it may be said that no man knows so well as the author of any performance

what it has cost him, and the length of time and study devoted to it. This is one, among other reasons, why no man can pronounce an opinion upon himself. The happiness of the result bears no proportion to the difficulties overcome or the pains taken. *Materiam superabat opus*, is an old and fatal complaint. The definition of genius is that it acts unconsciously; and those who have produced immortal works, have done so without knowing how or why. The greatest power operates unseen, and executes its appointed task with as little ostentation as difficulty. Whatever is done best, is done from the natural bent and disposition of the mind. It is only where our incapacity begins, that we begin to feel the obstacles, and to set an undue value on our triumph over them. Correggio, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, did what they did without premeditation or effort—their works came from their minds as a natural birth—if you had asked them why they adopted this or that style, they would have answered, *because they could not help it*, and because they knew of no other. So Shakespear says:

"Our poesy is as a gum which issues
From whence 'tis nourish'd. The fire i' th' flint
Shows not till it be struck: our gentle flame
Provokes itself; and, like the current, flies
Each bound it chafes."

Shakespear himself was an example of his own rule, and appears to have owed almost every thing to chance, scarce any thing to industry or design. His poetry flashes from him, like the lightning from the summer-cloud, or the stroke from the sun-flower. When we look at the admirable comic designs of Hogarth, they seem, from the unfinished state in which they are left, and from the freedom of the pencilling, to have cost him little trouble; whereas the *Sigismunda* is a very laboured and comparatively feeble performance, and he accordingly set great store by it. He also thought highly of his portraits, and boasted that "he could paint equal to Vandyke, give him his time and let him choose his subject." This was the very reason why he could not. Vandyke's excellence consisted in this, that he could paint a fine portrait of any one at sight: let him take ever so much pains or choose ever so bad a subject, he could not help making something of it. His eye, his mind, his hand was cast in the mould of grace and delicacy. Milton again is understood to have preferred *Paradise Regained* to his other works. This, if so, was either because he himself was conscious of having failed in it; or because others thought he had. We are willing to think well of that which we know wants our

favourable opinion, and to prop the ricketty bantling. Every step taken, *invitâ Minerva*, costs us something, and is set down to account; whereas we are borne on the full tide of genius and success into the very haven of our desires, almost imperceptibly. The strength of the impulse by which we are carried along prevents the sense of difficulty or resistance: the true inspiration of the Muse is soft and balmy as the air we breathe; and indeed, leaves us little to boast of, for the effect hardly seems to be our own.

There are two persons who always appear to me to have worked under this involuntary, silent impulse more than any others; I mean Rembrandt and Correggio. It is not known that Correggio ever saw a picture of any great master. He lived and died obscurely in an obscure village. We have few of his works, but they are all perfect. What truth, what grace, what angelic sweetness are there! Not one line or tone that is not divinely soft or exquisitely fair; the painter's mind rejecting, by a natural process, all that is discordant, coarse, or unpleasing. The whole is an emanation of pure thought. The work grew under his hand as if of itself, and came out without a flaw, like the diamond from the rock. He knew not what he

did; and looked at each modest grace as it stole from the canvas with anxious delight and wonder. Ah! gracious God! not he alone; how many more in all time have looked at their works with the same feelings, not knowing but they too may have done something divine, immortal, and finding in that sole doubt ample amends for pining solitude, for want, neglect, and an untimely fate. Oh! for one hour of that uneasy rapture, when the mind first thinks it has struck out something that may last for ever; when the germ of excellence bursts from nothing on the startled sight! Take, take away the gaudy triumphs of the world, the long deathless shout of fame, and give back that heart-felt sigh with which the youthful enthusiast first weds immortality as his secret bride! And thou too, Rembrandt! who wert a man of genius, if ever painter was a man of genius, did this dream hang over you as you painted that strange picture of *Jacob's Ladder?* Did your eye strain over those gradual dusky clouds into futurity, or did those white-vested, beaked figures babble to you of fame as they approached? Did you know what you were about, or did you not paint much as it happened? Oh! if you had thought once about yourself, or any thing but the subject, it would

have been all over with "the glory, the intuition, the amenity," the dream had fled, the spell had been broken. The hills would not have looked like those we see in sleep—that tatterdemalion figure of Jacob, thrown on one side, would not have slept as if the breath was fairly taken out of his body. So much do Rembrandt's pictures savour of the soul and body of reality, that the thoughts seem identical with the objects—if there had been the least question what he should have done, or how he should do it; or how far he had succeeded, it would have spoiled every thing. Lumps of light hung upon his pencil and fell upon his canvas like dew-drops: the shadowy veil was drawn over his backgrounds by the dull, obtuse finger of night, making darkness visible by still greater darkness that could only be felt!

Cervantes is another instance of a man of genius, whose work may be said to have sprung from his mind, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. Don Quixote and Sancho were a kind of twins; and the jests of the latter, as he says, fell from him like drops of rain when he least thought of it. Shakespear's creations were more multiform, but equally natural and unstudied. Raphael and Milton seem partial exceptions to this rule. Their productions were

of the *composite order;* and those of the latter sometimes even amount to centos. Accordingly, we find Milton quoted among those authors, who have left proofs of their entertaining a high opinion of themselves, and of cherishing a strong aspiration after fame. Some of Shakespear's Sonnets have been also cited to the same purpose; but they seem rather to convey wayward and dissatisfied complaints of his untoward fortune than any thing like a triumphant and confident reliance on his future renown. He appears to have stood more alone and to have thought less about himself than any living being. One reason for this indifference may have been, that as a writer he was tolerably successful in his life-time, and no doubt produced his works with very great facility.

I hardly know whether to class Claude Lorraine as among those who succeeded most "through happiness or pains." It is certain that he imitated no one, and has had no successful imitator. The perfection of his landscapes seems to have been owing to an inherent quality of harmony, to an exquisite sense of delicacy in his mind. His monotony has been complained of, which is apparently produced from a preconceived idea in his mind; and not long ago I heard a person, not more distin-

guished for the subtilty than the *naïveté* of his sarcasms, remark, "Oh! I never look at Claude: if one has seen one of his pictures, one has seen them all; they are every one alike: there is the same sky, the same climate, the same time of day, the same tree, and that tree is like a cabbage. To be sure, they say he did pretty well; but when a man is always doing one thing, he ought to do it pretty well." There is no occasion to write the name under this criticism, and the best answer to it is that it is true—his pictures always are the same, but we never wish them to be otherwise. Perfection is one thing. I confess I think that Claude knew this, and felt that his were the finest landscapes in the world—that ever had been, or would ever be.

I am not in the humour to pursue this argument any farther at present, but to write a digression. If the reader is not already apprised of it, he will please to take notice that I write this at Winterslow. My style there is apt to be redundant and excursive. At other times it may be cramped, dry, abrupt; but here it flows like a river, and overspreads its banks. I have not to seek for thoughts or hunt for images: they come of themselves, I inhale them with the breeze, and the silent groves are vocal with a thousand recollections—

"And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Hang on each leaf, and cling to ev'ry bough."

Here I came fifteen years ago, a willing exile; and as I trod the lengthened greensward by the low wood-side, repeated the old line,

"My mind to me a kingdom is!"

I found it so then, before, and since; and shall I faint, now that I have poured out the spirit of that mind to the world, and treated many subjects with truth, with freedom, and power, because I have been followed with one cry of abuse ever since *for not being a government-tool?* Here I returned a few years after to finish some works I had undertaken, doubtful of the event, but determined to do my best; and wrote that character of Millimant which was once transcribed by fingers fairer than Aurora's, but no notice was taken of it, because I was not a government-tool, and must be supposed devoid of taste and elegance by all who aspired to these qualities in their own persons. Here I sketched my account of that old honest Signior Orlando Friscobaldo, which with its fine, racy, acrid tone that old crab-apple, G*ff***d, would have relished or pretended to relish, had I been a government-tool! Here too I have written

Table-Talks without number, and as yet without a falling-off, till now that they are nearly done, or I should not make this boast. I could swear (were they not mine) the thoughts in many of them are founded as the rock, free as air, the tone like an Italian picture. What then? Had the style been like polished steel, as firm and as bright, it would have availed me nothing, for I am not a government-tool! I had endeavoured to guide the taste of the English people to the best old English writers; but I had said that English kings did not reign by right divine, and that his present majesty was descended from an elector of Hanover in a right line; and no loyal subject would after this look into Webster or Deckar because I had pointed them out. I had done something (more than any one except Schlegel) to vindicate the *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* from the stigma of French criticism: but our Anti-Jacobin and Anti-Gallican writers soon found out that I had said and written that Frenchmen, Englishmen, men were not slaves by birth-right. This was enough to *damn* the work. Such has been the head and front of my offending. While my friend Leigh Hunt was writing the *Descent of Liberty*, and strewing the march of the Allied Sovereigns with flowers, I sat by the waters of Babylon and hung my

harp upon the willows. I knew all along there was but one alternative—the cause of kings or of mankind. This I foresaw, this I feared; the world see it now, when it is too late. Therefore I lamented, and would take no comfort when the Mighty fell, because we, all men, fell with him, like lightning from heaven, to grovel in the grave of Liberty, in the stye of Legitimacy! There is but one question in the hearts of monarchs, whether mankind are their property or not. There was but this one question in mine. I had made an abstract, metaphysical principle of this question. I was not the dupe of the voice of the charmers. By my hatred of tyrants I knew what their hatred of the free-born spirit of man must be, of the semblance, of the very name of Liberty and Humanity. And while others bowed their heads to the image of the BEAST, I spit upon it and buffetted it, and made mouths at it, and pointed at it, and drew aside the veil that then half concealed it, but has been since thrown off, and named it by its right name; and it is not to be supposed that my having penetrated their mystery would go unrequited by those whose darling and whose delight the idol, half-brute, half-demon, was, and who were ashamed to acknowledge the image and superscription as their own! Two

half-friends of mine, who would not make a whole one between them, agreed the other day that the indiscriminate, incessant abuse of what I write was mere prejudice and party-spirit, and that what I do in periodicals and without a name does well, pays well, and is "cried out upon in the top of the compass." It is this indeed that has saved my shallow skiff from quite foundering on Tory spite and rancour; for when people have been reading and approving an article in a miscellaneous journal, it does not do to say when they discover the author afterwards (whatever might have been the case before) it is written by a blockhead; and even Mr. Jerdan recommends the volume of CHARACTERISTICS as an excellent little work, because it has no cabalistic name in the title-page, and swears "there is a first-rate article of forty pages in the last number of the Edinburgh from Jeffrey's own hand," though when he learns against his will that it is mine, he devotes three successive numbers of the LITERARY GAZETTE to abuse "that *strange* article in the last number of the Edinburgh Review." Others who had not this advantage have fallen a sacrifice to the obloquy attached to the suspicion of doubting, or of being acquainted with any one who is known to doubt, the divinity of kings. Poor

Keats paid the forfeit of this *lezè majesté* with his health and life. What, though his Verses were like the breath of spring, and many of his thoughts like flowers—would this, with the circle of critics that beset a throne, lessen the crime of their having been praised in the Examiner? The lively and most agreeable Editor of that paper has in like manner been driven from his country and his friends who delighted in him, for no other reason than having written the Story of Rimini, and asserted ten years ago, "that the most accomplished prince in Europe was an Adonis of fifty!"

> "Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
> That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse!"

I look out of my window and see that a shower has just fallen: the fields look green after it, and a rosy cloud hangs over the brow of the hill; a lily expands its petals in the moisture, dressed in its lovely green and white; a shepherd-boy has just brought some pieces of turf with daisies and grass for his young mistress to make a bed for her sky-lark, not doomed to dip his wings in the dappled dawn—my cloudy thoughts draw off, the storm of angry politics has blown over—Mr. Blackwood, I am yours—Mr. Croker, my service to you—Mr. T. Moore,

I am alive and well—Really, it is wonderful how little the worse I am for fifteen years' wear and tear, how I come upon my legs again on the ground of truth and nature, and "look abroad into universality," forgetting that there is any such person as myself in the world!

I have let this passage stand (however critical) because it may serve as a practical illustration to show what authors really think of themselves when put upon the defensive—(I confess, the subject has nothing to do with the title at the head of the Essay!)—and as a warning to those who may reckon upon their fair portion of popularity as the reward of the exercise of an independent spirit and such talents as they possess. It sometimes seems at first sight as if the low scurrility and jargon of abuse by which it is attempted to overlay all common sense and decency by a tissue of lies and nicknames, everlastingly repeated and applied indiscriminately to all those who are not of the regular government-party, was peculiar to the present time, and the anomalous growth of modern criticism; but if we look back, we shall find the same system acted upon, as often as power, prejudice, dulness, and spite found their account in playing the game into one another's hands—in decrying popular efforts, and

in giving currency to every species of base metal that had their own conventional stamp upon it. The names of Pope and Dryden were assailed with daily and unsparing abuse—the epithet A. P. E. was levelled at the sacred head of the former—and if even men like these, having to deal with the consciousness of their own infirmities and the insolence and spurns of wanton enmity, must have found it hard to possess their souls in patience, any living writer amidst such contradictory evidence can scarcely expect to retain much calm, steady conviction of his own merits, or build himself a secure reversion in immortality.

However one may in a fit of spleen and impatience turn round and assert one's claims in the face of low-bred, hireling malice, I will here repeat what I set out with saying, that there never yet was a man of sense and proper spirit, who would not decline rather than court a comparison with any of those names, whose reputation he really emulates—who would not be sorry to suppose that any of the great heirs of memory had as many foibles as he knows himself to possess—and who would not shrink from including himself or being included by others in the same praise, that was offered to long-established and universally acknowledged

merit, as a kind of profanation. Those who are ready to fancy themselves Raphaels and Homers are very inferior men indeed—they have not even an idea of the mighty names that "they take in vain." They are as deficient in pride as in modesty, and have not so much as served an apprenticeship to a true and honourable ambition. They mistake a momentary popularity for lasting renown, and a sanguine temperament for the inspirations of genius. The love of fame is too high and delicate a feeling in the mind to be mixed up with realities—it is a solitary abstraction, the secret sigh of the soul—

> "It is all one as we should love
> A bright particular star, and think to wed it."

A name "fast-anchored in the deep abyss of time" is like a star twinkling in the firmament, cold, silent, distant, but eternal and sublime; and our transmitting one to posterity is as if we should contemplate our translation to the skies. If we are not contented with this feeling on the subject, we shall never sit in Cassiopeia's chair, nor will our names, studding Ariadne's crown or streaming with Berenice's locks, ever make

> "the face of heaven so bright,
> That birds shall sing, and think it were not night."

Those who are in love only with noise and show, instead of devoting themselves to a life of study, had better hire a booth at Bartlemy-Fair, or march at the head of a recruiting regiment with drums beating and colours flying!

It has been urged, that however little we may be disposed to indulge the reflection at other times or out of mere self-complacency, yet the mind cannot help being conscious of the effort required for any great work while it is about it, of

"The high endeavour and the glad success."

I grant that there is a sense of power in such cases, with the exception before stated; but then this very effort and state of excitement engrosses the mind at the time, and leaves it listless and exhausted afterwards. The energy we exert, or the high state of enjoyment we feel, puts us out of conceit with ourselves at other times: compared to what we are in the act of composition, we seem dull, common-place people, generally speaking; and what we have been able to perform is rather matter of wonder than of self-congratulation to us. The stimulus of writing is like the stimulus of intoxication, with which we can hardly sympathise in our sober moments, when we are no longer under

the inspiration of the demon, or when the virtue is gone out of us. While we are engaged in any work, we are thinking of the subject, and cannot stop to admire ourselves; and when it is done, we look at it with comparative indifference. I will venture to say, that no one but a pedant ever read his own works regularly through. They are not *his*—they are become mere words, waste-paper, and have none of the glow, the creative enthusiasm, the vehemence, and natural spirit with which he wrote them. When we have once committed our thoughts to paper, written them fairly out, and seen that they are right in the printing, if we are in our right wits, we have done with them for ever. I sometimes try to read an article I have written in some magazine or review—(for when they are bound up in a volume, I dread the very sight of them)—but stop after a sentence or two, and never recur to the task. I know pretty well what I have to say on the subject, and do not want to go to school to myself. It is the worst instance of the *bis repetita crambe* in the world. I do not think that even painters have much delight in looking at their works after they are done. While they are in progress, there is a great degree of satisfaction in considering what has been done, or what is still to do—but this is

hope, is reverie, and ceases with the completion of our efforts. I should not imagine Raphael or Correggio would have much pleasure in looking at their former works, though they might recollect the pleasure they had had in painting them; they might spy defects in them (for the idea of unattainable perfection still keeps pace with our actual approaches to it), and fancy that they were not worthy of immortality. The greatest portrait-painter the world ever saw used to write under his pictures, "*Titianus faciebat*," signifying that they were imperfect; and in his letter to Charles V. accompanying one of his most admired works, he only spoke of the time he had been about it. Annibal Caracci boasted that he could do like Titian and Correggio, and, like most boasters, was wrong. *(See his spirited Letter to his cousin Ludovico, on seeing the pictures at Parma.)*

The greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, while we are young. I have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps any one. As I grow older, it fades; or else, the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it. At present, I have neither time nor inclination for it: yet I should like to devote a year's entire leisure to a course of the English Novelists; and perhaps clap on that old sly knave, Sir Walter, to the

end of the list. It is astonishing how I used formerly to relish the style of certain authors, at a time when I myself despaired of ever writing a single line. Probably this was the reason. It is not in mental as in natural ascent —intellectual objects seem higher when we survey them from below, than when we look down from any given elevation above the common level. My three favourite writers about the time I speak of were Burke, Junius, and Rousseau. I was never weary of admiring and wondering at the felicities of the style, the turns of expression, the refinements of thought and sentiment: I laid the book down to find out the secret of so much strength and beauty, and took it up again in despair, to read on and admire. So I passed whole days, months, and I may add, years; and have only this to say now, that as my life began, so I could wish that it may end. The last time I tasted this luxury in its full perfection was one day after a sultry day's walk in summer between Farnham and Alton. I was fairly tired out; I walked into an inn-yard (I think at the latter place); I was shown by the waiter to what looked at first like common out-houses at the other end of it, but they turned out to be a suite of rooms, probably a kundred years old—the one I entered

opened into an old-fashioned garden, embellished with beds of larkspur and a leaden Mercury; it was wainscoted, and there was a grave-looking, dark-coloured portrait of Charles II. hanging up over the tiled chimney-piece. I had "*Love for Love*" in my pocket, and began to read; coffee was brought in in a silver coffee-pot; the cream, the bread and butter, every thing was excellent, and the flavour of Congreve's style prevailed over all. I prolonged the entertainment till a late hour, and relished this divine comedy better even than when I used to see it played by Miss Mellon, as *Miss Prue;* Bob Palmer, as *Tattle;* and Bannister, as honest *Ben.* This circumstance happened just five years ago, and it seems like yesterday. If I count my life so by lustres, it will soon glide away; yet I shall not have to repine, if, while it lasts, it is enriched with a few such recollections!

ESSAY XIII.

ON THE PLEASURE OF HATING.

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ON THE PLEASURE OF HATING.

THERE is a spider crawling along the matted floor of the room where I sit (not the one which has been so well allegorised in the admirable *Lines to a Spider*, but another of the same edifying breed)—he runs with heedless, hurried haste, he hobbles awkwardly towards me, he stops—he sees the giant shadow before him, and, at a loss whether to retreat or proceed, meditates his huge foe—but as I do not start up and seize upon the straggling caitiff, as he would upon a hapless fly within his toils, he takes heart, and ventures on, with mingled cunning, impudence, and fear. As he passes me, I lift up the matting to assist his escape, am glad to get rid of the unwelcome intruder, and shudder at the recollection after he is gone. A child, a woman, a clown, or a moralist a century ago, would have crushed the little reptile to death—my philosophy has got beyond that—I bear the creature no ill-will, but still I

hate the very sight of it. The spirit of malevolence survives the practical exertion of it. We learn to curb our will and keep our overt actions within the bounds of humanity, long before we can subdue our sentiments and imaginations to the same mild tone. We give up the external demonstration, the *brute* violence, but cannot part with the essence or principle of hostility. We do not tread upon the poor little animal in question (that seems barbarous and pitiful!) but we regard it with a sort of mystic horror and superstitious loathing. It will ask another hundred years of fine writing and hard thinking to cure us of the prejudice, and make us feel towards this ill-omened tribe with something of "the milk of human kindness," instead of their own shyness and venom.

Nature seems (the more we look into it) made up of antipathies: without something to hate, we should lose the very spring of thought and action. Life would turn to a stagnant pool, were it not ruffled by the jarring interests, the unruly passions of men. The white streak in our own fortunes is brightened (or just rendered visible) by making all around it as dark as possible; so the rainbow paints its form upon the cloud. Is it pride? Is it envy? Is it the force of contrast? Is it weakness or malice? But so it is,

that there is a secret affinity, a *hankering* after evil in the human mind, and that it takes a perverse, but a fortunate delight in mischief, since it is a never-failing source of satisfaction. Pure good soon grows insipid, wants variety and spirit. Pain is a bitter-sweet, which never surfeits. Love turns, with a little indulgence, to indifference or disgust: hatred alone is immortal. —Do we not see this principle at work every where? Animals torment and worry one another without mercy: children kill flies for sport: every one reads the accidents and offences in a newspaper, as the cream of the jest: a whole town runs to be present at a fire, and the spectator by no means exults to see it extinguished. It is better to have it so, but it diminishes the interest; and our feelings take part with our passions, rather than with our understandings. Men assemble in crowds, with eager enthusiasm, to witness a tragedy: but if there were an execution going forward in the next street, as Mr. Burke observes, the theatre would be left empty. A strange cur in a village, an idiot, a crazy woman, are set upon and baited by the whole community. Public nuisances are in the nature of public benefits. How long did the Pope, the Bourbons, and the Inquisition keep the people of England in

breath, and supply them with nick-names to vent their spleen upon! Had they done us any harm of late? No: but we have always a quantity of superfluous bile upon the stomach, and we wanted an object to let it out upon. How loth were we to give up our pious belief in ghosts and witches, because we liked to persecute the one, and frighten ourselves to death with the other! It is not the quality so much as the quantity of excitement that we are anxious about: we cannot bear a state of indifference and *ennui:* the mind seems to abhor a *vacuum* as much as ever matter was supposed to do. Even when the spirit of the age (that is, the progress of intellectual refinement, warring with our natural infirmities) no longer allows us to carry our vindictive and headstrong humours into effect, we try to revive them in description, and keep up the old bugbears, the phantoms of our terror and our hate, in imagination. We burn Guy Faux in effigy, and the hooting and buffeting and maltreating that poor tattered figure of rags and straw makes a festival in every village in England once a year. Protestants and Papists do not now burn one another at the stake: but we subscribe to new editions of *Fox's Book of Martyrs;* and the secret of the success of the *Scotch Novels* is

much the same—they carry us back to the feuds, the heart-burnings, the havoc, the dismay, the wrongs and the revenge of a barbarous age and people—to the rooted prejudices and deadly animosities of sects and parties in politics and religion, and of contending chiefs and clans in war and intrigue. We feel the full force of the spirit of hatred with all of them in turn. As we read, we throw aside the trammels of civilization, the flimsy veil of humanity. "Off, you lendings!" The wild beast resumes its sway within us, we feel like hunting-animals, and as the hound starts in his sleep and rushes on the chase in fancy, the heart rouses itself in its native lair, and utters a wild cry of joy, at being restored once more to freedom and lawless, unrestrained impulses. Every one has his full swing, or goes to the Devil his own way. Here are no Jeremy Bentham Panopticons, none of Mr. Owen's impassable Parallelograms, (Rob Roy would have spurned and poured a thousand curses on them), no long calculations of self-interest—the will takes its instant way to its object; as the mountain-torrent flings itself over the precipice, the greatest possible good of each individual consists in doing all the mischief he can to his neighbour: that is charming, and finds a sure and sympathetic

chord in every breast! So Mr. Irving, the celebrated preacher, has rekindled the old, original, almost exploded hell-fire in the aisles of the Caledonian Chapel, as they introduce the real water of the New River at Sadler's Wells, to the delight and astonishment of his fair audience. *'Tis pretty, though a plague,* to sit and peep into the pit of Tophet, to play at *snap-dragon* with flames and brimstone (it gives a smart electrical shock, a lively fillip to delicate constitutions), and to see Mr. Irving, like a huge Titan, looking as grim and swarthy as if he had to forge tortures for all the damned! What a strange being man is! Not content with doing all he can to vex and hurt his fellows here, "upon this bank and shoal of time," where one would think there were heart-aches, pain, disappointment, anguish, tears, sighs, and groans enough, the bigoted maniac takes him to the top of the high peak of school divinity to hurl him down the yawning gulf of penal fire; his speculative malice asks eternity to wreak its infinite spite in, and calls on the Almighty to execute its relentless doom! The cannibals burn their enemies and eat them, in good-fellowship with one another: meek Christian divines cast those who differ from them but a hair's-breadth, body and soul, into hell-fire, for

the glory of God and the good of his creatures! It is well that the power of such persons is not co-ordinate with their wills: indeed, it is from the sense of their weakness and inability to control the opinions of others, that they thus "outdo termagant," and endeavour to frighten them into conformity by big words and monstrous denunciations.

The pleasure of hating, like a poisonous mineral, eats into the heart of religion, and turns it to rankling spleen and bigotry; it makes patriotism an excuse for carrying fire, pestilence, and famine into other lands: it leaves to virtue nothing but the spirit of censoriousness, and a narrow, jealous, inquisitorial watchfulness over the actions and motives of others. What have the different sects, creeds, doctrines in religion been but so many pretexts set up for men to wrangle, to quarrel, to tear one another in pieces about, like a target as a mark to shoot at? Does any one suppose that the love of country in an Englishman implies any friendly feeling or disposition to serve another, bearing the same name? No, it means only hatred to the French, or the inhabitants of any other country that we happen to be at war with for the time. Does the love of virtue denote any wish to discover or amend our own faults? No, but

it atones for an obstinate adherence to our own vices by the most virulent intolerance to human frailties. This principle is of a most universal application. It extends to good as well as evil: if it makes us hate folly, it makes us no less dissatisfied with distinguished merit. If it inclines us to resent the wrongs of others, it impels us to be as impatient of their prosperity. We revenge injuries: we repay benefits with ingratitude. Even our strongest partialities and likings soon take this turn. "That which was luscious as locusts, anon becomes bitter as coloquintida;" and love and friendship melt in their own fires. We hate old friends: we hate old books: we hate old opinions; and at last we come to hate ourselves.

I have observed that few of those, whom I have formerly known most intimate, continue on the same friendly footing, or combine the steadiness with the warmth of attachment. I have been acquainted with two or three knots of inseparable companions, who saw each other "six days in the week," that have broken up and dispersed. I have quarrelled with almost all my old friends, (they might say this is owing to my bad temper, but) they have also quarrelled with one another. What is become of "that set of wlfist-players," celebrated by ELIA in his

notable *Epistle to Robert Southey, Esq.* (and now I think of it—that I myself have celebrated in this very volume) "that for so many years called Admiral Burney friend?" They are scattered, like last year's snow. Some of them are dead—or gone to live at a distance—or pass one another in the street like strangers; or if they stop to speak, do it as coolly and try to *cut* one another as soon as possible. Some of us have grown rich—others poor. Some have got places under Government—others a *niche* in the Quarterly Review. Some of us have dearly earned a name in the world; whilst others remain in their original privacy. We despise the one; and envy and are glad to mortify the other. Times are changed; we cannot revive our old feelings; and we avoid the sight and are uneasy in the presence of those, who remind us of our infirmity, and put us upon an effort at seeming cordiality, which embarrasses ourselves and does not impose upon our *quondam* associates. Old friendships are like meats served up repeatedly, cold, comfortless, and distasteful. The stomach turns against them. Either constant intercourse and familiarity breed weariness and contempt; or if we meet again after an interval of absence, we appear no longer the same. One is too wise,

another too foolish for us; and we wonder we did not find this out before. We are disconcerted and kept in a state of continual alarm by the wit of one, or tired to death of the dulness of another. The *good things* of the first (besides leaving stings behind them) by repetition grow stale, and lose their startling effect; and the insipidity of the last becomes intolerable. The most amusing or instructive companion is at best like a favourite volume, that we wish after a time to *lay upon the shelf;* but as our friends are not willing to be laid there, this produces a misunderstanding and ill-blood between us.—Or if the zeal and integrity of friendship is not abated, or its career interrupted by any obstacle arising out of its own nature, we look out for other subjects of complaint and sources of dissatisfaction. We begin to criticise each other's dress, looks, and general character. "Such a one is a pleasant fellow, but it is a pity he sits so late!" Another fails to keep his appointments, and that is a sore that never heals. We get acquainted with some fashionable young men or with a mistress, and wish to introduce our friend; but he is awkward and a sloven, the interview does not answer, and this throws cold water on our intercourse. Or he makes himself obnoxious to opinion—and

we shrink from our own convictions on the subject as an excuse for not defending him. All or any of these causes mount up in time to a ground of coolness or irritation—and at last they break out into open violence as the only amends we can make ourselves for suppressing them so long, or the readiest means of banishing recollections of former kindness, so little compatible with our present feelings. We may try to tamper with the wounds or patch up the carcase of departed friendship, but the one will hardly bear the handling, and the other is not worth the trouble of embalming! The only way to be reconciled to old friends is to part with them for good: at a distance we may chance to be thrown back (in a waking dream) upon old times and old feelings: or at any rate, we should not think of renewing our intimacy, till we have fairly *spit our spite*, or said, thought, and felt all the ill we can of each other. Or if we can pick a quarrel with some one else, and make him the scape-goat, this is an excellent contrivance to heal a broken bone. I think I must be friends with Lamb again, since he has written that magnanimous Letter to Southey, and told him a piece of his mind!—I don't know what it is that attaches me to H—— so much, except that he and I, whenever we meet, sit in

judgment on another set of old friends, and "carve them as a dish fit for the Gods." There was L— H—, John Scott, Mrs. ——, whose dark raven locks make a picturesque background to our discourse, B—, who is grown fat, and is, they say, married, R——; these had all separated long ago, and their foibles are the common link that holds us together. We do not affect to condole or whine over their follies; we enjoy, we laugh at them till we are ready to burst our sides, "*sans* intermission, for hours by the dial." We serve up a course of anecdotes, *traits*, master-strokes of character, and cut and hack at them till we are weary. Perhaps some of them are even with us. For my own part, as I once said, I like a friend the better for having faults that one can talk about. "Then," said Mrs. ——, "you will never cease to be a philanthropist!" Those in question were some of the choice-spirits of the age, not "fellows of no mark or likelihood;" and we so far did them justice: but it is well they did not hear what we sometimes said of them. I care little what any one says of me, particularly behind my back, and in the way of critical and analytical discussion—it is looks of dislike and scorn, that I answer with the worst venom of my pen. The expression of the face wounds me more than the

expressions of the tongue. If I have in one instance mistaken this expression, or resorted to this remedy where I ought not, I am sorry for it. But the face was too fine over which it mantled, and I am too old to have misunderstood it! . . . I sometimes go up to ——'s; and as often as I do, resolve never to go again. I do not find the old homely welcome. The ghost of friendship meets me at the door, and sits with me all dinner-time. They have got a set of fine notions and new acquaintance. Allusions to past occurrences are thought trivial, nor is it always safe to touch upon more general subjects. M. does not begin as he formerly did every five minutes, "Fawcett used to say," &c. That topic is something worn. The girls are grown up, and have a thousand accomplishments. I perceive there is a jealousy on both sides. They think I give myself airs, and I fancy the same of them. Every time I am asked, "If I do not think Mr. Washington Irvine a very fine writer?" I shall not go again till I receive an invitation for Christmas-day in company with Mr. Liston. The only intimacy I never found to flinch or fade was a purely intellectual one. There was none of the cant of candour in it, none of the whine of mawkish sensibility. Our mutual acquaintance were considered merely as subjects

of conversation and knowledge, not at all of affection. We regarded them no more in our experiments than "mice in an air-pump:" or like malefactors, they were regularly cut down and given over to the dissecting-knife. We spared neither friend nor foe. We sacrificed human infirmities at the shrine of truth. The skeletons of character might be seen, after the juice was extracted, dangling in the air like flies in cobwebs: or they were kept for future inspection in some refined acid. The demonstration was as beautiful as it was new. There is no surfeiting on gall: nothing keeps so well as a decoction of spleen. We grow tired of every thing but turning others into ridicule, and congratulating ourselves on their defects.

We take a dislike to our favourite books, after a time, for the same reason. We cannot read the same works for ever. Our honey-moon, even though we wed the Muse, must come to an end; and is followed by indifference, if not by disgust. There are some works, those indeed that produce the most striking effect at first by novelty and boldness of outline, that will not bear reading twice: others of a less extravagant character, and that excite and repay attention by a greater nicety of details, have hardly interest enough to keep alive our

continued enthusiasm. The popularity of the most successful writers operates to wean us from them, by the cant and fuss that is made about them, by hearing their names everlastingly repeated, and by the number of ignorant and indiscriminate admirers they draw after them: —we as little like to have to drag others from their unmerited obscurity, lest we should be exposed to the charge of affectation and singularity of taste. There is nothing to be said respecting an author that all the world have made up their minds about: it is a thankless as well as hopeless task to recommend one that nobody has ever heard of. To cry up Shakespeare as the God of our idolatry, seems like a vulgar, national prejudice: to take down a volume of Chaucer, or Spenser, or Beaumont and Fletcher, or Ford, or Marlowe, has very much the look of pedantry and egotism. I confess it makes me hate the very name of Fame and Genius when works like these are "gone into the wastes of time," while each successive generation of fools is busily employed in reading the trash of the day, and women of fashion gravely join with their waiting-maids in discussing the preference between Paradise Lost and Mr. Moore's Loves of the Angels. I was pleased the other day on going into a shop to

ask, "If they had any of the *Scotch Novels?*" to be told—"That they had just sent out the last, Sir Andrew Wylie!"—Mr. Galt will also be pleased with this answer! The reputation of some books is raw and *unaired:* that of others is worm-eaten and mouldy. Why fix our affections on that which we cannot bring ourselves to have faith in, or which others have long ceased to trouble themselves about? I am half afraid to look into Tom Jones, lest it should not answer my expectations at this time of day; and if it did not, I should certainly be disposed to fling it into the fire, and never look into another novel while I lived. But surely, it may be said, there are some works, that, like nature, can never grow old; and that must always touch the imagination and passions alike! Or there are passages that seem as if we might brood over them all our lives, and not exhaust the sentiments of love and admiration they excite: they become favourites, and we are fond of them to a sort of dotage. Here is one:

> "——— Sitting in my window
> Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a God,
> I thought (but it was you), enter our gates;
> My blood flew out and back again, as fast
> As I had puffed it forth and sucked it in
> Like breath; then was I called away in haste

To entertain you: never was a man
Thrust from a sheepcote to a sceptre, raised
So high in thoughts as I; you left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you for ever. I did hear you talk
Far above singing!"

A passage like this indeed leaves a taste on the palate like nectar, and we seem in reading it to sit with the Gods at their golden tables: but if we repeat it often in ordinary moods, it loses its flavour, becomes vapid, "the wine of *poetry* is drank, and but the lees remain." Or, on the other hand, if we call in the aid of extraordinary circumstances to set it off to advantage, as the reciting it to a friend, or after having our feelings excited by a long walk in some romantic situation, or while we

"—— play with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair"—

we afterwards miss the accompanying circumstances, and instead of transferring the recollection of them to the favourable side, regret what we have lost, and strive in vain to bring back "the irrevocable hour"—wondering in some instances how we survive it, and at the melancholy blank that is left behind! The pleasure rises to its height in some moment of calm solitude or intoxicating sympathy, declines

ever after, and from the comparison and a conscious falling-off, leaves rather a sense of satiety and irksomeness behind it. . . . . "Is it the same in pictures?" I confess it is, with all but those from Titian's hand. I don't know why, but an air breathes from his landscapes, pure, refreshing as if it came from other years; there is a look in his faces that never passes away. I saw one the other day. Amidst the heartless desolation and glittering finery of Fonthill, there is a portfolio of the Dresden Gallery. It opens, and a young female head looks from it; a child, yet woman grown; with an air of rustic innocence and the graces of a princess, her eyes like those of doves, the lips about to open, a smile of pleasure dimpling the whole face, the jewels sparkling in her crisped hair, her youthful shape compressed in a rich antique dress, as the bursting leaves contain the April buds! Why do I not call up this image of gentle sweetness, and place it as a perpetual barrier between mischance and me?—It is because pleasure asks a greater effort of the mind to support it than pain; and we turn, after a little idle dalliance, from what we love to what we hate!

As to my old opinions, I am heartily sick of them. I have reason, for they have deceived me sadly. I was taught to think, and I was

willing to believe, that genius was not a bawd—that virtue was not a mask—that liberty was not a name—that love had its seat in the human heart. Now I would care little if these words were struck out of the dictionary, or if I had never heard them. They are become to my ears a mockery and a dream. Instead of patriots and friends of freedom, I see nothing but the tyrant and the slave, the people linked with kings to rivet on the chains of despotism and superstition. I see folly join with knavery, and together make up public spirit and public opinions. I see the insolent Tory, the blind Reformer, the coward Whig! If mankind had wished for what is right, they might have had it long ago. The theory is plain enough; but they are prone to mischief, "to every good work reprobate." I have seen all that had been done by the mighty yearnings of the spirit and intellect of men, "of whom the world was not worthy," and that promised a proud opening to truth and good through the vista of future years, undone by one man, with just glimmering of understanding enough to feel that he was a king, but not to comprehend how he could be king of a free people! I have seen this triumph celebrated by poets, the friends of my youth and the friends of man,

but who were carried away by the infuriate tide that, setting in from a throne, bore down every distinction of right reason before it; and I have seen all those who did not join in applauding this insult and outrage on humanity proscribed, hunted down (they and their friends made a bye-word of), so that it has become an understood thing that no one can live by his talents or knowledge who is not ready to prostitute those talents and that knowledge to betray his species, and prey upon his fellow-man. "This was some time a mystery: but the time gives evidence of it." The echoes of liberty had awakened once more in Spain, and the morning of human hope dawned again: but that dawn has been overcast by the foul breath of bigotry, and those reviving sounds stifled by fresh cries from the time-rent towers of the Inquisition—man yielding (as it is fit he should) first to brute force, but more to the innate perversity and dastard spirit of his own nature, which leaves no room for farther hope or disappointment. And England, that arch-reformer, that heroic deliverer, that mouther about liberty and tool of power, stands gaping by, not feeling the blight and mildew coming over it, nor its very bones crack and turn to a paste under the grasp and circling folds of this new monster, Legitimacy!

In private life do we not see hypocrisy, servility, selfishness, folly, and impudence succeed, while modesty shrinks from the encounter, and merit is trodden under foot? How often is "the rose plucked from the forehead of a virtuous love to plant a blister there!" What chance is there of the success of real passion? What certainty of its continuance? Seeing all this as I do, and unravelling the web of human life into its various threads of meanness, spite, cowardice, want of feeling, and want of understanding, of indifference towards others and ignorance of ourselves—seeing custom prevail over all excellence, itself giving way to infamy—mistaken as I have been in my public and private hopes, calculating others from myself, and calculating wrong; always disappointed where I placed most reliance; the dupe of friendship, and the fool of love; have I not reason to hate and to despise myself? Indeed I do; and chiefly for not having hated and despised the world enough*.

* The only exception to the general drift of this Essay (and that is an exception in theory—I know of none in practice) is, that in reading we always take the right side, and make the case properly our own. Our imaginations are sufficiently excited, we have nothing to do with the matter but as a pure creation of the mind, and we therefore yield to the natural, unwarped impression of good and evil. Our own passions, in-

terests, and prejudices out of the question, or in an abstracted point of view, we judge fairly and conscientiously; for conscience is nothing but the abstract idea of right and wrong. But no sooner have we to act or suffer, than the spirit of contradiction or some other demon comes into play, and there is an end of common sense and reason. Even the very strength of the speculative faculty, or the desire to square things with an *ideal* standard of perfection (whether we can or no) leads perhaps to half the absurdities and miseries of mankind. We are hunting after what we cannot find, and quarrelling with the good within our reach. Among the thousands that have read *The Heart of Mid Lothian* there assuredly never was a single person who did not wish Jeanie Deans success. Even Gentle George was sorry for what he had done, when it was over, though he would have played the same prank the next day: and the *unknown* author, in his immediate character of contributor to Blackwood and the Sentinel, is about as respectable a personage as Daddy Ratton himself. On the stage, every one takes part with Othello against Iago. Do boys at school, in reading Homer, generally side with the Greeks or Trojans?

ESSAY XIV.

ON DR. SPURZHEIM'S THEORY.

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It appears to me that the truth of physiognomy (if we allow it) overturns the science of craniology. For instance, the system of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim supposes that every *bump* or protuberance on the skull is necessarily produced by an extraordinary protrusion of the brain or increase of the organ of perception immediately underneath it. Now behind a great part of the face we have no brain, and can have no such organs existing and accounting for the external phenomena; and yet here are projections or ramifications of bones, muscles, &c. which are allowed by these reasoners and most other persons to indicate character and intellect just as surely as the new-discovered organs of craniology. If then these projections or modifications of the countenance have such force and meaning where there is no brain underneath to account for them, is it not clear that in other cases the theory which assumes that such pro-

jections can only be caused by an extraordinary pressure of the brain, and of the appropriate local organ within, is in itself an obvious fallacy and contradiction? The long prudent chin, the scornful nose *(naso adunco)*, the good-natured mouth, are proverbial in physiognomy, but are totally excluded from the organic system. I mentioned this objection once to Dr. Spurzheim personally, but he only replied—"We have treated of physiognomy in our larger work!" I was not satisfied with this answer.

I am utterly ignorant of the anatomical and physiological part of this question, and only propose to point out a few errors or defects in his system, which appear on the author's own showing, in the manner of marginal notes on the work. I would observe, by the bye, that the style and manner of the writer are not such as to induce the reader to place a very implicit reliance on his authority; and in a subject, which is so much an occult science, a *terra incognita* in the world of observation, depending on the traveller's report, authority is a good deal. The craniologist may make fools of his disciples at pleasure, unless he is an honest man. They have no check upon him. The face is as "a book where men may read strange matters:" it is open to every one: the language

of expression is as it were a kind of mother-tongue, in which every one acquires more or less tact, so that his own practical judgment forms a test to confirm or contradict the interpretation which is given of it. But the skull, on which Drs. Gall and Spurzheim have laid their hands for the discovery of so many important and undeniable truths, nobody else knows any thing about, except as they are pleased to tell us. It is concealed from ordinary observation by a covering of hair, and we must go by hearsay. We may indeed examine one or two individual instances, and grope out our way to truth in the dark; but there can be no habitual conclusion formed, no broad light of experience thrown upon the subject. The unbeliever in the fashionable system may well exclaim—

"Oh! let me perish in the face of day!"

The only opportunity for fairly studying this question was at the period when people wore artificial hair; for then any well-disposed person had only to pull off his wig, and *show you his mind**. But the hair is a sort of natural mask

* There is a fellow in Hogarth's *Election Dinner*, holding his wig in one hand, and wiping his bare scalp with the other. What a peep for a craniologist! Let him look well to it, and

to the head. The craniologist indeed "draws the curtain, and shows the picture:" but if there is the least want of good faith in him, the science is all abroad again. Unfortunately for the credit due to his system, Dr. Spurzheim (or his predecessor, Dr. Gall, who got up the facts) has very much the air of a German quack-doctor. He is, so to speak it, the Baron Munchausen of marvellous metaphysics. His object is to astonish the reader into belief, as jugglers make clowns gape and swallow whatever they please. He fabricates wonders with easy assurance, and deals in men "whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, and the anthropophagi, that each other eat." He readily admits whatever suits his purpose, and magisterially doubts whatever makes against it. He has a cant of credulity mixed up with the cant of scepticism—things not easily reconciled, except by a very deliberate effort indeed. There is something gross and fulsome in all this, that has tended to

see that his system is borne out by the gesture, character, and actions of the portrait! A celebrated Scotch barrister being introduced to Dr. Spurzheim without his wig, said—"It is dangerous to appear before you, Doctor, at this disadvantage." To which the Doctor replied—"Oh! you have nothing to fear. Your head ——" "At least," interrupted the other, "you will not find the organ of credulity there!"

bring discredit on a system, which after all has probably some foundation in nature, but which is here overloaded with exaggerated and dogmatical assertions, warranted for facts. We doubt the whole, when we know a part to be false, and withhold our assent from a creed, the great apostle of which wants modesty, candour, and self-knowledge! Another thing to be considered, and in truth the great stumbling-block in the way of nearly the whole of this system, is this, that the principle of thought and feeling in man is one, whereas the present doctrine supposes it to be many. The mind is one, or it is infinite. If there is not some single, superintending faculty or conscious power to which all subordinate organic impressions are referred as to a centre, and which decides and reacts upon them all, then there is no end of particular organs, and there must be not only an organ for poetry, but an organ for poetry of every sort and size, and so of all the rest. This will be seen more at large when we come to details; but at present I wish to lay it down as a corner-stone or fundamental principle in the argument.

Of the way in which Dr. Spurzheim clears the ground before him, and disarms the incredulity of the reader by a string of undeniable or equi-

vocal propositions blended together, the following may serve as a specimen.

" The doctrine, that every thing is provided with its own properties, was from time to time checked by metaphysicians and scholastic divines; but by degrees it gained ground, and the maxim that matter is inert was entirely refuted. Natural philosophers discovered corporeal properties, the laws of attraction and repulsion, of chemical affinity, of fermentation, and even of organization. They considered the phenomena of vegetables as the production of material qualities—as properties of matter. Glisson attributed to matter a particular activity, and to the animal fibre a specific irritability. De Gorter acknowledged in vegetable life something more than pure mechanism. Winter and Zups proved that the phenomena of vegetable life ought to be ascribed only to irritability. Of this, several phenomena of flowers and leaves indicate a great degree. The hop and French-bean twine round rods which are planted near them. The tendrils of vines curl round poles or the branches of neighbouring trees. The ivy climbs the oak, and adheres to its sides, &c. Now it would be absurd to pretend that the organization of animals is entirely destitute of

properties: therefore Frederick Hoffman took it for the basis of his system, that the human body, like all other bodies, is endowed with material properties." Page 56.

"Here be truths," but "dashed and brewed with lies" or doubtful points. Yet they pass all together without discrimination or selection. There is a simplicity in many of the propositions amounting to a sort of *bonhommie*. There is an over-measure of candour and plainness. A man who gravely informs you, as an important philosophical discovery, that "the tendrils of vines curl round poles," and that "the human body is endowed with material properties," may escape without the imputation of intending to delude the unwary. But these kind of innocent pretences are like shoeing-horns to draw on the hardest consequences. By the serious offer of this meat for babes, you are prepared to swallow a horse-drench of parboiled paradoxes. You are thrown off your guard into a state of good-natured surprise, by the utter want of all meaning; and our craniologist catches his wondering disciples in a trap of truisms. Instances might be multiplied from this part of the work, where the writer is occupied in getting up the plot, and lulling asleep any suspicion, or feeling of

petulance in the mind of the public. Just after, he says—

"In former times there were philosophers who thought that the soul forms its own body; but if this be the case, an ill-formed body never could be endowed with a good soul. All the natural influence of generation, nutrition, climate, education, &c. would *therefore* be inexplicable. *Hence*, it is much more reasonable to think that the soul, in this life, is only confined in the body, and makes use of its respective instruments, which entirely depend on the laws of the organization. In blindness, the soul is not mutilated, but it cannot perceive light without eyes, &c." *with other matters of like pith and moment.* The author's style is interlarded with too many *hences* and *therefores;* neither do his inferences hang well together. They are ill-cemented. He announces instead of demonstrating; and jumps at a conclusion in a heavy, awkward way. He constantly assumes the point in dispute, or makes a difficulty on one side of a question a decisive proof of the opposite view of it. What credit can be attached to him in matters of fact or theory where he must have it almost all his own way, when he presumes so much on the *cullibility* of his readers in common

argument? "If these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—Once more:

"No one will endeavour to prove that the five senses are the production of our will: their laws are determined by nature. *Therefore* as soon as an animal meets with the food destined for it, its smell and taste declare in favour of it. *Thus* it is not astonishing that a kid, taken from the uterus of its mother, preferred broom-tops to other vegetables which were presented to it. And Richerand is wrong in saying—'If such a fact have any reality, we should be forced to admit that an animal may possess a foreknowledge of what is proper for it; and that, independently of any impressions which may be afterwards received by the senses, it is capable, from the moment of birth, of choosing, that is, of comparing and judging of what is presented to it.' The hog likewise eats the acorn the first time he finds it. Animals however have, on that account, no need of any previous exercise, of any innate idea, of any comparison or reflection. The relations between the external world and the five senses are determined by creation. We cannot see as red that which is yellow, nor as great that which is little. How

should animals have any idea of what they have not felt?" Page 59.

This is what might be termed the *inclusive style* in argument. It is impossible to distinguish the premises from the conclusion. We have facts for arguments, and arguments for facts. He plays off a phantasmagoria of illustrations as proofs, like Sir Epicure Mammon in the Alchemist. It is like being in a round-about at a fair, or skating, or flying. It is not easy to make out even the terms of the question, so completely are they overlaid and involved one in the other, and that, as it should seem, purposely, or from a habit of confounding the plainest things. To proceed, however, to something more material. In treating of innate faculties, Dr. Spurzheim runs the following career, which will throw considerable light on the vagueness and contradictoriness of his general mode of reasoning.

"Now it is beyond doubt, that all the instinctive aptitudes and inclinations of animals are innate. Is it not evident that the faculties by which the spider makes its web, the honey-bee its cell, the beaver its hut, the bird its nest, &c. are inherent in the nature of these animals? When the young duck or tortoise runs towards

the water as soon as hatched, when the bird brushes the worm with its bill, when the monkey, before he eats the may-bug, bites off its head, &c. all these and similar dispositions are conducive to the preservation of the animals; but they are not at all acquired."

If by *acquired*, be meant that these last acts do not arise out of certain impressions made on the senses by different objects, (such as the agreeable or disagreeable smell of food, &c.) this is by no means either clear or acknowledged on all hands.

"According to the same law," he adds, [What law?] "the hamster gathers corn and grain, the dog hides his superfluous food"—[This at any rate seems a rational act.]—"the falcon kills the hare by driving his beak into its neck," &c.

"In the same way, all instinctive manifestations of man must be innate. The new-born child sucks the fingers and seeks the breast, as the puppy and calf seek the dug."

The circumstance here indiscreetly mentioned of the child sucking the fingers as well as the nipple, certainly does away the idea of *final causes*. It shows that the child, from a particular state of irritation of its mouth, fastens on any object calculated to allay that irritation, whether

conducive to its sustenance or not. It is difficult sometimes to get children to take the breast. Dr. S. takes up a common prejudice, without any qualification or inquiry, while it suits his purpose, and lays it down without ceremony when it no longer serves the turn. He proceeds—

"*I have mentioned above, that voluntary motion and the five external senses, common to man and animals, are innate.* Moreover, if man and animals feel certain propensities and sentiments *with clear and distinct consciousness*, we must consider these faculties as innate."—[The *clear and distinct consciousness* has nothing to do with the matter.]—"Thus, if in animals we find examples of mutual inclination between the sexes, of maternal care for the young, of attachment, of mutual assistance, of sociableness, of union for life, of peaceableness, of desire to fight, of propensity to destroy, of circumspection, of slyness, of love of flattery, of obstinacy, &c. all these faculties must be considered as innate."—[A finer assumption of the question than this, or a more complete jumble of instincts and acquired propensities together, never was made. The author has here got hold of a figure called *encroachment*, and advances accordingly!]—"Let all these faculties be ennobled in man: let

animal instinct of propagation be changed into moral love; the inclination of animals for their young into the virtue of maternal care for children; animal attachment into friendship; animal susceptibility of flattery into love of glory and ambition; the nightingale's melody into harmony; the bird's nest and the beaver's hut into palaces and temples, &c.: these faculties are still of the same nature, and all these phenomena are produced by faculties common to man and animals. They are only ennobled in man by the influence of superior qualities, which give another direction to the inferior ones." Page 82.

This last passage appears to destroy his whole argument. For the Doctor contends that every particular propensity or modification of the mind must be innate, and have its separate organ; but if there are "faculties common to man and animals," which are ennobled or debased by their connexion with other faculties, then we must admit a general principle of thought and action varying according to circumstances, and the organic system becomes nearly an impertinence.

The following short section, entitled INNATENESS OF THE HUMAN FACULTIES, will serve to place in a tolerably striking point of view the

turn of this writer to an unmeaning, *quackish* sort of common-place reasoning.

" Finally, man is endowed with faculties which are peculiar to him. Now it is to be investigated, whether the faculties which distinguish man from animals, and which constitute his human character, are innate. It must be answered, that all the faculties of man are given by creation, and that human nature is as determinate as that of every other being. Thus, though we see that man compares his sensations and ideas, inquires into the causes of phenomena, draws consequences and discovers laws and general principles; that he measures distances and times, and crosses the sea from one end to another; that he acknowledges culpability and worthiness; that he bears a monitor in his own breast, and raises his mind to the idea and adoration of God:—yet all these faculties result neither from accidental influence from without, nor from his own will. How indeed could the Creator abandon man in the greatest and most important occupations, and give him up to chance? No!" Page 83.

No, indeed; but there is a difference between *chance* and a number of bumps on the head. One would think that all this, being common to the same being, proceeded from a general fa-

culty manifesting itself in different ways, and not from a parcel of petty faculties huddled together nobody knows how, and acting without concert or coherence. Does man cross the seas, measure the heavens, construct telescopes, &c. from a general capacity of invention in the mind, or does the navigator lie *perdu*, shut up like a Jack-in-a-box in one corner of the brain, the mechanic in another, the astronomer in another, and so forth? That is the simple question. Dr. Spurzheim adds shortly after—

"We every where find the same species; whether man stain his skin, or powder his hair; whether he dance to the sound of a drum or to the music of a concert; whether he adore the stars, the sun, the moon, or the God of Christians. The special faculties are every where the same." *Page 85.*

He ought to have said the *general* faculties are the same, not the *special.* But if there is not a specific faculty and organ for every act of the mind and object in nature, then Dr. Spurzheim must admit the existence of a general faculty modified by circumstances, and we must be slow in accounting for different phenomena from particular independent organs, without the most obvious proofs or urgent necessity. His organs are too few or too many.

"Malebranche," says our author, "deduces the different manner of thinking and feeling in men and women from the different delicacy of the cerebral fibres. According to our doctrine, certain parts of the brain are more developed in men, others in women; and in that way is the difference of the manifestations of their faculties perfectly explicable." Page 105.

For my part, I prefer Malebranche's solution to the more modern one. It seems to me that the strength or weakness, the pliancy or firmness of the characters of men or women is to be accounted for from something in the general texture of their minds, just as their corporeal strength or weakness, activity or grace is to be accounted for from something in the general texture of their bodies, and not from the arbitrary preponderance of this or that particular limb or muscle. I think the analogy is conclusive against our author. If there is no difference of *quality; i. e.* of delicacy, firmness, &c. in the parts of the brain "more developed in men," the difference of *quantity* alone cannot account for the difference of character. And, on the other hand, if we allow such a difference of quality in the cerebral fibres, or of hardness and softness, flexibility or sluggishness in the whole brain, we shall have no occasion for par-

ticular bumps or organs of the brain to account for the difference in the minds of men and women generally. Drs. Gall and Spurzheim seem desirous to set aside all differences of texture, irritability, tenacity, &c. in the composition of the brain, as if these were *occult* qualities, and to reduce every thing to positive and ostensible quantity; not considering that quantity alone accounts for no difference of character or operation. The increasing the size of the organ of music, for instance, will not qualify that organ to perform the functions of the organ of colour: there must be a natural aptitude in *kind*, before we talk about the degree or excess of the faculty resulting from the peculiar conformation of a given part. The piling up larger parcels of the same materials of the brain will not produce a new faculty: we must include the nature of the different materials, and it is not too much to assume that whenever the faculty is available to a number of purposes, the difference in the nature of the thinking substance cannot be merely *local* or organic. For instance, say that the *Organ of Memory* is distinguished by greater tenaciousness of particles, or by something correspondent to this; that in like manner, the *Organ of Fancy* is distinguished by greater irritability of structure;

is it not better to suppose that the first character pervades the brain of a man remarkable for strong memory, and the last that of another person excelling in fancy, generally and primarily, instead of supposing that the whole retentiveness of the brain is in the first instance lodged in one particular compartment of it, and the whole volatility or liveliness, in the second instance, imprisoned in another hole or corner, with quite as little reason? It may be said, that the organ in question is not an organ of memory in general, but of the memory of some particular thing. Then this will require that there should be an organ of memory of every other particular thing; an organ of invention, and an organ of judgment of the same; which is too much to believe, and besides can be of no use: for unless in addition to these separate organs, over which is written—"No connexion with the next door"—we have some general organ or faculty, receiving information, comparing ideas, and arranging our volitions, there can be no one homogeneous act or exercise of the understanding, no one art attained, or study engaged in. There will either be a number of detached objects and sensations without a mind to superintend them, or else a number of minds for every distinct object, without any com-

mon link of intelligence among themselves. In the first case, each organ would be that of a mere brute instinct, that could never arrive at the dignity of any one art or science, as painting or music; in the second case, no art or science (such as poetry) ever could exist that implied a comparison between any two ideas or the impressions of different organs, as of sight and sound.

Dr. Spurzheim observes, (page 107) "The child advances to boyhood, adolescence, and manhood. Then all these faculties manifest the greatest energy. By degrees they begin to decrease; and in the decrepitude of old age, the sensations are blunted, the sentiments weak, and the intellectual faculties almost or entirely suppressed. Hence, as the manifestations of the faculties of the mind and understanding are proportionate to the organization, it is evident that they depend on it."

I do not see the exact inference meant to be drawn here. All the conditions above enumerated affect the whole brain generally. There is not an organ of youth, of manhood, of decrepitude, &c.

"A brain too small, however, is always accompanied with imbecility. Willis described the brain of one who was an idiot from birth.

It was not more than half the size of an ordinary brain." Page 109.

At this rate, if there are idiots by birth, there must be also such a thing as general capacity.

" I have seen two twin-boys so like each other, that it was almost impossible to distinguish them. Their inclinations and talents presented also a striking and astonishing similitude. Two others, twin-sisters, are very different: in the one the muscular system is the most developed, in the other the nervous. The former is of little understanding, whereas the second is endowed with strong intellectual faculties." Page 112.

This is coming to Malebranche's way of putting the question. In the same page we find the following *morceau:*—

" Gaubius relates, that a girl, whose father had killed men in order to eat them, and who was separated from her father in her infancy and carefully educated, committed the same crime. Gaubius drew from this fact the consequence, that the faculties are propagated with the organization."—Good Gaubius Gobbo! Without believing his fact, we need not dispute his consequence.

" Malebranche explains the difference of the faculties of both sexes, the various kinds and particular tastes of different nations and in-

dividuals, by the firmness and softness, dryness and moisture of the cerebral fibres; and he remarks that our time cannot be better employed than in investigating the material causes of human phenomena. The Cartesians, by their doctrine of the tracks which they admit in the brain, acknowledge the influence of the brain on the intellectual faculties." Page 118.

Dr. Spurzheim altogether explodes the doctrine of a difference in constitutional temperaments, the sanguine, the phlegmatic, and so on; because this difference, being general, is not consistent with his special organs. He also denies unequivocally the doctrine of the association of ideas, which Des Cartes's "tracks in the brain" were meant to explain. One would think this alone decisive against his book. Indeed the capacity of association, possessed in a greater or less degree, seems to be the great discriminating feature between man and man. But what *organ of association* there can be between different *local* organs it is difficult to conjecture; and Dr. Spurzheim was right in boldly denying a truth which he could not reconcile with his mechanical and incongruous theory.

"There are persons who maintain that in the highest degree of magnetic influence, the mani-

festations of the soul are independent of the organization." Page 122.

What! have we animal magnetism in the dance too? Would our great physiologist awe us into belief by bringing into the field quackery greater than his own? Then it is time to be on our guard.

"We find sanguine and bilious individuals, who are intellectual or stupid, meek or impetuous; we may observe phlegmatics of a bold, quarrelsome, and imperious character. In short, the doctrine of the temperaments, as applied to the indication of determinate faculties, is not more sure or better founded, than divination by the hands, feet, skin, hair, ears, and similar physiognomical signs." Page 128.

That is, red-haired people, for instance, have not a certain general character. After that, I will not believe a word the learned author says upon his bare authority.

Dr. Spurzheim with great formality devotes a number of sections to prove that the several senses alone, without any other faculty or principle of thought and feeling, do not account for the moral and intellectual faculties. "There needs no ghost to tell us that." In his mode of entering upon this part of his subject, the Doctor

seems to have been aware of the old maxim—*Divide et impera*—Distinguish and confound!

"We have still to examine whether sight produces any moral sentiment or intellectual faculty. It is a common opinion that the art of painting is the result of sight; and it is true that eyes are necessary to perceive colours, as the ears are to perceive sounds and tones; but the art of painting does not consist in the perception of colours, any more than music in the perception of sounds. Sight, therefore, and the faculty of painting are not at all in proportion. The sight of many animals is more perfect than that of man, but they do not know what painting is; and in mankind the talent of painting cannot be measured by the acuteness of sight. Great painters never attribute their talent to their eyes. They say, it is not the eye, but the understanding, which perceives the harmony of colours." Page 158.

This is well put, and quite true; that is, it is the mind alone that perceives the relation and connexion between all our sensations. Thus the impression of the line bounding one side of the face does not perceive or compare itself with the impression of the line forming the other side of the face, but it is the mind or understanding (by means indeed of the eye) that

perceives and compares the two impressions together. But neither will an *organ of painting* answer this purpose, unless this separate organ includes a separate *mind*, with a complete workshop and set of offices to execute all the departments of judgment, taste, invention, &c. *i. e.* to compare, analyse, and combine its own particular sensations. But neither will this answer the end. For either all these must be included under one, and exhibit themselves in the same proportions wherever the organ exists, which is not the fact; or if they are distinct and independent of one another, then they cannot be expressed by any one organ. Dr. Spurzheim has, in a subsequent part of his work, provided for this objection, and divided the *Organ of Sight* into five or six subdivisions; such as, the *Organ of Form*, the *Organ of Colour*, the *Organ of Weight*, the *Organ of Space*, and God knows how many more. This is evading and at the same time increasing the difficulty. Thus. The best draughtsmen are not observed to be always the best colourists, Raphael and Titian for example. There must therefore be a new division of the *Organ of Sight* into (at least) the two divisions of Form and Colour. Now it is not to be supposed that these organs are thus separated merely for separation's sake, but that

there is something in the quality or texture of the substance of the brain in each organ, peculiarly fitted for each different sort of impression, and by an excess of quantity producing an excess of faculty. The *size* alone of the organ cannot account for the difference of the faculty, without this other condition of quality annexed. Suppose the distinguishing quality of the *organ of form* to be a certain tenaciousness; that of the *organ of colour* to be a certain liquid softness in the finer particles of the brain. Now a greater quantity of the medullary substance of a given texture and degree of softness will produce the *organ of colour:* but then will not a greater degree of this peculiar softness or texture (whatever it is) with the same quantity of substance, produce an extraordinary degree of faculty equally? That is, we make the fineness or quality of the nerves, brain, mind, atone for the want of quantity, or get the faculty universally without the organ: Q. E. D. Dr. Spurzheim does not make an organ of melody and an organ of harmony; yet he ought, if every distinct operation of the mind or senses requires a distinct local organ, and if his whole system is not merely arbitrary. Farther, one part of painting is *expression*, namely, the power of connecting certain feelings of pleasure and pain

with certain lines and movements of face; that is, there ought to be an *organ of expression*, or an organ, in the first place, of pleasure and pain—which Dr. Spurzheim denies—these being general and not specific manifestations of the mind; and in the second place, an organ for associating the impressions of one organ with those of all the rest—of which the Doctor also denies the existence or even possibility. His is quite a new constitution of the human mind.

"Finally, every one feels that he thinks by means of the brain." Page 165.

When it was urged before, that every one thinks that he feels by means of the heart, Dr. Spurzheim scouted this sort of proof as vulgar and ridiculous, it being then against himself.

"Tiedeman relates the example of one Moser, who was insane on one side of his head, and who observed his madness with the other side. Gall attended a minister who had a similar disease *for three years*. He heard constantly on his left side reproaches and injuries; he turned his head on this side, and looked at the persons."—[What persons?]—"With his right side he *commonly* judged the madness of his left side; but sometimes *in a fit of fever* he could not rectify his peculiar state. Long after being cured, if he happened to be angry, or if he had

drunk more than he was accustomed to do, he observed in his left side a tendency to his former alienation." Page 171.

This is an amusing book after all. One might collect from it materials for a new edition of the *Wonderful Magazine*. How familiarly the writer insinuates the most incredible stories, and takes for granted the minutest circumstances! This style, though it may incline the credulous to gape and swallow every thing, must make the judicious grieve, and the wary doubt.

"It is however necessary to remark, that all observations of this kind can only be made upon beings of the same species, and it is useless to compare the same faculty with the respective organ in different species of animals. *The irritability is very different in different kinds of animals.*" Page 205.

And why not in the same kind?

"The state of disease proves also the plurality of the organs. For how is it possible to combine partial insanities with the unity of the brain? A chemist was a madman in every thing but chemistry. An embroiderer in her fits, and in the midst of the greatest absurdities, calculated perfectly how much stuff was necessary to such or such a piece of work." Page 219.

Does our author mean that there is an organ of chemistry, and an organ for embroidery? King Ferdinand would be a good subject to ascertain this last observation upon. If I could catch him, I should be disposed to try. I would not let him go, like the Cortes.

"The external apparatus of the nerves of the *five* senses are said to be different, because they receive different impressions: but how is it possible that different impressions should be transmitted to the brain by the same nerves? How can the impressions of light be propagated by the auditory nerve?" Page 227.

We only know that they are not. But how, we might ask, can the different impressions of sight—as red, yellow, blue—be transmitted by the same nerve?

"Plattner made the following objection:—'A musician plays with his fingers on all instruments; why should not the soul manifest all its operations by means of one and the same organ?' This observation is rather for than against the plurality of the organs. First, there are ten fingers which play: moreover, the instruments present different chords or holes. We admit only one organ for music; and all kinds of music are produced by this organ. Hence, this

assertion of Plattner does not invalidate our theory." Page 230.

But it does though, unless you could show that a musician can play only as many tunes as he has fingers, on the same kind of instrument. Dr. Spurzheim contends elsewhere that one organ can perform only one function, and brings as a proof of the plurality of the organs the alternate action and rest of the body and mind. But if the same organ cannot undergo a different state, how can it rest? There must then be an organ of action and an organ of rest, an organ to do something and an organ to do nothing! Very fine and clear all this.

The following passages seem to bear closest upon the general question, and I shall apply myself to answer them as well as I can.

"The intellectual faculties have been placed in the brain; but it was impossible to point out any organ, because organs have been sought for faculties which have no organ, namely, for common and general faculties .... General or common phenomena never have any particular organ. Secretion, for instance, is a common name, and secretion in general has no particular organ; but the particular secretions, as of saliva, bile, tears, &c. are attached to particular organs. Sensation is an expression which indicates the

common function of the five external senses; therefore this common faculty has no particular organ, but every determinate sensation—as of sight, hearing, smelling, taste, or feeling—is attached to some particular organ." Page 273.

In the first place, then, Dr. Spurzheim himself assigns particular organs for common and general faculties; such as self-love, veneration, hope, covetousness, language, comparison, causality, wit, imitation, &c. He also talks of the organs of abstraction, individuality, invention, &c. It would be hard to deny that these mean more than one thing, and refer to more than to one class of sensations. In fact, the author all through his volume regularly confounds general principles with particular acts and mechanic exercises of the mind. Secondly, he either does not or will not apprehend the precise meaning of the terms *common* or *general faculties*, as applied to the mind. *Sensation* is a common function of the five external senses, that is, it belongs severally to the exercise of the five external senses: but *understanding* is a common faculty of the mind—not because it belongs to any number of ideas in succession, but because it takes cognizance of a number of them together. UNDERSTANDING is perceiving the relations between objects and impressions,

which the senses and particular or individual organs can never do. It is this superintending or *conscious* faculty or principle which is aware both of the colour, form, and sound of an object; which connects its present appearance with its past history; which arranges and combines the multifarious impressions of nature into one whole; which balances the various motives of action, and renders man what he is—a rational and moral agent: but for this faculty we find no regular place or station assigned amongst that heap of organic *tumuli*, which could produce nothing but mistakes and confusion. The seat of this faculty is one, or its impressions are communicated to the same intelligent mind, which contemplates and reacts upon them all with more or less wisdom and comprehensive power. Thus the poet is not a being made up of a string of organs—an eye, an ear, a heart, a tongue—but is one and the same intellectual essence, looking out from its own nature on all the different impressions it receives, and to a certain degree moulding them into itself. It is *I* who remember certain objects, who judge of them, who invent from them, who connect certain sounds that I hear, as of a thrush singing, with certain sights that I see, as the wood whence the notes issue. There is some bond, some conscious connexion

brought about between these impressions and acts of the mind; that is, there is a principle of joint and common understanding in the mind, quite different from the ignorance in which the ear is left of what passes before the eye, &c. and which overruling and primary faculty of the soul, blending with all our thoughts and feelings, Dr. Spurzheim does not once try to explain, but does all he can to overturn.

"Understanding," he continues, "being an expression which designates a general faculty, has no particular organ, but every determinate species of understanding is attached to a particular organ." *Ibid.*

If so, how does it contrive to compare notes with the impressions of other particular organs? For example, how does the organ of wit combine with the organ of form or of individuality, to give a grotesque description of a particular person, without some common and intermediate faculty to which these several impressions are consciously referred? Will any one tell me that one of these detached and very particular organs perceives the stained *colour* of an old cloak—[How would it apprehend any thing of the *age* of the cloak?]—that another has a glimpse of its antiquated *form;* that a third supplies a *witty* allusion or apt *illustration* of

what it knows nothing about; and that this patch-work process is clubbed by a number of organic impressions that have no law of subordination, nor any common principle of reference between them, to make a lively caricature?

"Finally, it is the same with all common faculties of the understanding—of which philosophers and physiologists speak—namely, with *perception*, *memory*, or *recollection*, *judgment*, and *imagination*. These expressions are common, and the respective faculties have no organs; but every peculiar perception—memory, judgment, and imagination—as of space, form, colour, tune, and number, have their particular organs. If the common faculties of understanding were attached to particular organs, the person who possesses the organ of any common faculty ought to be endowed with all particular kinds of faculties. If there were an organ of perception, of memory, of judgment, or of imagination, any one who has the organ of perception, of memory, of judgment, or of imagination, ought to possess all kinds of perception, of memory, of judgment, or of imagination. Now this is against all experience." *Ibid.*

No more, than a person possessed of the general organ of sight must be acquainted equally with all objects of sight, whether they

have ever fallen in his way, or whether he has studied them or not. But it is according to all experience, that some persons are distinguished more by memory, others more by judgment, others more by imagination, generally speaking. That is, upon whatever subject they exercise their attention, they show the same turn of mind or predominating faculty. Some people do every thing from impulse. It is their character under all impressions and in all studies and pursuits. Is there then an organ of impulse? An organ of tune is intelligible, because it denotes a general faculty exercised upon a particular class of impressions, *viz.* sounds. But what is an organ of wit? It means nothing; for it denotes a faculty without any specific objects: and yet *an organ* means a faculty limited to specific objects. Wit is the faculty of combining suddenly and glancing over the whole range of art and nature; but an organ is shut up in a particular cell of sensation, and sees nothing beyond itself.

"One has a great memory of one kind," proceeds our author, "and a very little memory of other things."

Yes, partly from habit, but chiefly, I grant, from original character; not because certain things strike upon a certain part of the brain,

but touch a certain quality or disposition of the mind. Thus, some remember trifles, others things of importance. Some retain forms, others feelings. Some have a memory of words, others of things. Some remember what regards their own interests, others what is interesting in itself, according to the bias and scope of their sensibility. All these results depend evidently not on a particular local impression, but on a variety of general causes combined in one common effect. Again: "A poet possesses one kind of imagination in a high degree; but has he therefore every kind of imagination, as that of inventing machines, of composing music, &c.?" Page 275.

Or it may be retorted—Has he therefore every kind of poetical imagination? Does the same person write epigrams and epics, comedies and tragedies? Is there not light and serious poetry? Is not Mr. T. Moore just as likely to become Newton as to become Milton? Or as the wren the eagle? Yet Dr. Spurzheim has but one organ for poetry, as he says—"We allow but one organ for tune." But is there not tune in poetry? Has not the poet an ear as well as the musician? How then does the author reconcile these common or analogous qualities,

and the complex impressions from all the senses implied in poetry (for instance) with his detached, circumscribed, *local* organs? His system is merely *nominal*, and a very clumsy specimen of nomenclature into the bargain.—Poetry relates to all sorts of impressions, from all sorts of objects, moral and physical. Music relates to one sort of impressions only, and so far there is an excuse for assigning it to a particular organ; but it also implies *common* and general faculties, such as retention, judgment, invention, &c. which essentially reside in the understanding or thinking principle at large. But suppose them to be cooped and cabined up in the particular organ:—do they not exist in different degrees, and is this difference expressed merely by the size of the organ?—It cannot be. The circumstance of size can only determine that such a one is a great musician; not what sort of a musician he is. Therefore this characteristic difference is not expressed by quantity, and therefore none of the differences themselves, or faculties of judgment, invention, refinement, &c. which form the great musician, can be expressed by quantity; and if none of these component parts of musical genius are so expressed, why then "it follows, as the night the day," that

there can be no organ of music. There may be an organ peculiarly adapted for retaining musical impressions, but this (without including the intellectual operations, which is impossible) would only answer the purposes of a peculiarly fine and sensitive ear.

"Natural philosophers were wrong in looking for organs of common faculties."—[*That's* true.]—"A speculative philosopher may be satisfied with vague and common expressions, which do not denote the particular and determinate qualities of the different beings; but these general or common considerations are not sufficient for a naturalist who endeavours to know the functions and faculties of every organic part in particular. Throughout all natural history, the expressions are the less significant the more general or common they are; and a distinct knowledge of any being requires a study of its particularities." Page 275.

Take away the human mind and its common functions, operations, and principles, and Dr. Spurzheim's craniology gives a very satisfactory and categorical view of human nature. In material science, the common properties may be the least significant; but in the mind of man, the common principle (whatever it be) that feels, thinks, and acts, is the chief thing.

I do not believe then in the Doctor's *organs*, either generally or particularly. I have only his word for them; and reason and common sense are against them. There may be an exception now and then, but there is every where a total want of classification and analytic power. The author, instead of giving the *rationale* of any one thing, runs on with endless illustrations and assumptions of the same kind. The organs are sometimes general and sometimes particular; sometimes compound and sometimes simple. You know not what to make of them: they turn over like tumbler-pigeons. I should be inclined to admit the *organ of amativeness* as a physical reinforcement of a mental passion; but hardly that of *philoprogenitiveness*—at least, it is badly explained here. I will give an instance or two. "A male servant," Dr. Spurzheim observes, "seldom takes care of children so well as a woman." Women, then, are fond of children generally; not of their own merely. Is not this an extension of the organic principle beyond its natural and positive limits? Again: "Little girls are fond of dolls," &c. Is there then an express organ for this; since dolls are not literally children? Oh no! it is only a modification of the *organ of philoprogenitiveness.* Well then, why should not this organ itself

or particular propensity be a modification of philanthropy, or of an amiable disposition, good-nature, and generosity in general? There seems no assignable reason why most, if not all of these special organs should be considered as any thing more than so many manifestations or cases of general dispositions, capacities, &c. arising from general irritability, tenderness, firmness, quickness, comprehension, &c. of the mind or brain; just as the particular varieties and obliquities of organic faculties and affections are attributed by Spurzheim and Gall to a common law or principle combined with others, or with peculiar circumstances. The account of the *organ of inhabitiveness* is a master-piece of confusion. It is an organ seated on the top of the head, and impelling you to live in high places, and then again in low places; on land and water; to be here and there and everywhere; which is the same and different, and is in short an organ, not for any particular thing, but for all sorts of contradictions. First, it is the same as the organ of pride, and accounts for the chamois climbing rocks, and the eagle the sky; for children mounting on chairs, and kings on thrones, &c. But then some animals prefer low marshy grounds, and some birds build in the hollows, and not on the tops of trees. Then it looks like a

dispensation of Providence to people different regions of the earth; and one would think in this view that local prejudices would be resolved into a species of habitual attachment. But no, that would not be a *nostrum*. It is therefore said—"Nature, which intended that all regions and countries should be inhabited, assigned to all animals their dwellings, and gave to every kind of animal its respective propensity to some particular region;" that is, not to the place where it had been born and bred, but where *it was to be* born and bred. People who prefer this mode of philosophy are welcome to it. No wonder our author finds it "difficult to point out the seat of this organ;" yet he assures us, that "it must be deep-seated in the brain." The *organ of adhesiveness* is evidently the same as the general faculty of attachment. The *organ of combativeness* I conceive to be nothing but strength of bone and muscle, and some projection arising from and indicating these. The *organs of destructiveness and constructiveness* are the same, but "so as with a difference"—that is, they express strong will, with greater or less impatience of temper and comprehensiveness of mind. The conqueror who overturns one state, builds up and aggrandises another. I can conceive persons who are gifted with the *organ of*

veneration to have expanded brains as well as swelling ideas. "The head of CHRIST," says our physiologist, "is always represented as very elevated."—Yet he was remarkable for meekness as well as piety. Spurzheim says of the *organ of covetiveness*, that "it gives a desire for all that pleases." Again, Dr. Gall observed, that "persons of a firm and constant character have the top of the brain much developed;" and this is called the *organ of determinativeness*. Now if so, are we to believe that the difference in resolute and irresolute persons is confined to this organ, and that the nerves, fibres, &c. of the rest of the brain are not lax or firm, in proportion as the person is of a generally weak or determined character? The whole question nearly turns upon this. Say that there is a particular prominence in this part, owing to a greater strength and size of the levers of the will at this place. This would prove nothing but the particular manifestation or development of a general power; just as the prominence of the muscles of the calf of the leg denotes general muscular strength. But the craniologist says that the strength of the whole body lies in the calf of the leg, and has its seat or organ there. Not so, in the name of common sense! When Dr. Spurzheim gets down to the

visible region of the face, the eyes, forehead, &c. he makes sad work of it: an infinite number of distinctions are crowded one upon the back of the other, and to no purpose. Will any body believe that there are five or six different organs for the impressions of one sense (sight,) *viz.* colour, form, size, and so on? Do we see the form with one organ and the colour of the same object with another? There may be different organs to receive different material or concrete impressions, but surely only the mind can abstract the different impressions of the same sense from each other. The *organ of space* appears to me to answer to the look of wild, staring curiosity. All that is not accounted for in this way, either from general conformation or from physiognomical expression, is a heap of crude, capricious, unauthenticated trash. I select one paragraph out of this puzzling chaos, as a sample of what the reader must expect from the whole.

"What then is the *special* faculty of the organ of *individuality* and its sphere of activity? Persons endowed with this faculty in a high degree are attentive to *all* that happens around them; to every object, to every phenomenon, to every fact: *hence also to motions.* This faculty neither learns the qualities of objects, nor *the details* of facts: it knows only their existence.

The qualities of the objects, and the particularities of the facts, are known by the assistance of other organs. *Besides*, this faculty has knowledge of *all internal faculties, and acts upon them*. It wishes to know all by experience; consequently it puts every organ into action: it wishes to hear, see, smell, taste, and touch; *to know all arts and sciences;* it is fond of instruction, collects facts, and leads to practical knowledge." Page 430.

In the next page he affirms that "crystallography is the result of the organ of form," and that we do not get the ideas of roughness and smoothness from the touch.—But I will end here, and turn to the amusing account of Dousterswivel in the ANTIQUARY*!

* It appears, I understand, from an ingenious paper published by Dr. Combe of Edinburgh, that three heads have caused considerable uneasiness and consternation to a *Society of Phrenologists* in that city, *viz.* those of Sir Walter Scott, of the Duke of Wellington, and of Marshal Blucher. The first, contrary to the expectation of these learned persons, wants the organ of imagination; the second the organ of combination; and the last possesses the organ of fancy. This, I confess, as to the two first, appears to me a needless alarm. It would incline me (more than any thing I have yet heard) to an opinion that there is something like an art of divination in the science. I had long ago formed and been hardy enough to express a conviction that Sir Walter's *forte* is a sort

of *traditional literature* (whatever he accumulates or scatters through his pages, he leaves as he finds it, with very few marks of the master-mind upon it)—and as to the second person mentioned, he has just those powers of combination which belong to a man who leads a bull-dog in a string, and lets the animal loose upon his prey at the proper moment. With regard to Prince Blucher, if he had not "*fancy* in himself, he was the cause of it in others," for he turned the heads of many people, who "fancied" his campaigns were the precursors of the Millennium. I have at different times seen these three puzzling heads, and I should say that the Poet looks like a gentleman-farmer, the Prince like a corporal on guard, or the lieutenant of a press-gang, the Duke like nothing or nobody. You look at the head of the first with admiration of its capacity and solid contents, at the last with wonder at what it *can* contain (any more than a drum-head), at the man of "fancy" or of "*the* fancy" with disgust at the grossness and brutality which he did not affect to conceal. These, however, are slight physiognomical observations taken at random: but I should be happy to have my "squandering glances" in any degree confirmed by the profounder science and more accurate investigations of northern genius!

ESSAY XV.

ON EGOTISM.

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It is mentioned in the Life of Salvator Rosa, that on the occasion of an altar-piece of his being exhibited at Rome, in the triumph of the moment, he compared himself to Michael Angelo, and spoke against Raphael, calling him *hard, dry*, &c. Both these were fatal symptoms for the ultimate success of the work: the picture was in fact afterwards severely censured, so as to cause him much uneasiness; and he passed a great part of his life in quarrelling with the world for admiring his landscapes, which were truly excellent, and for not admiring his historical pieces, which were full of defects. Salvator wanted self-knowledge, and that respect for others, which is both a cause and consequence of it. Like many more, he mistook the violent and irritable workings of self-will (in a wrong direction) for the impulse of genius, and his insensibility to the vast superiority of others for a proof of his equality with them.

In the first place, nothing augurs worse for any one's pretensions to the highest rank of excellence than his making free with those of others. He who boldly and unreservedly places himself on a level with the *mighty dead*, shows a want of sentiment—the only thing that can ensure immortality to his own works. When we forestal the judgment of posterity, it is because we are not confident of it. A mind that brings all others into a line with its own naked or assumed merits, that sees all objects in the foreground as it were, that does not regard the lofty monuments of genius through the atmosphere of fame, is coarse, crude, and repulsive as a picture without aerial perspective. Time, like distance, spreads a haze and a glory round all things. Not to perceive this, is to want a sense, is to be without imagination. Yet there are those who strut in their own self-opinion, and deck themselves out in the plumes of fancied self-importance as if they were crowned with laurel by Apollo's own hand. There was nothing in common between Salvator and Michael Angelo: if there had, the consciousness of the power with which he had to contend would have over-awed and struck him dumb; so that the very familiarity of his approaches proved (as much as any thing else) the immense

distance placed between them. Painters alone seem to have a trick of putting themselves on an equal footing with the greatest of their predecessors, of advancing, on the sole strength of their vanity and presumption, to the highest seats in the Temple of Fame, of talking of themselves and Raphael and Michael Angelo in the same breath! What should we think of a poet who should publish to the world, or give a broad hint in private, that he conceived himself fully on a par with Homer or Milton or Shakespear? It would be too much for a friend to say so of him. But artists suffer their friends to puff them in the true "King Cambyses' vein" without blushing. Is it that they are often men without a liberal education, who have no notion of any thing that does not come under their immediate observation, and who accordingly prefer the living to the dead, and themselves to all the rest of the world? Or that there is something in the nature of the profession itself, fixing the view on a particular point of time, and not linking the present either with the past or future?

Again, Salvator's disregard for Raphael, instead of inspiring him with any thing like "vain and self-conceit," ought to have taught him the greatest diffidence in himself. Instead of an-

ticipating a triumph over Raphael from this circumstance, he might have foreseen in it the sure source of his mortification and defeat. The public looked to find in *his* pictures what he did not see in Raphael, and were necessarily disappointed. He could hardly be expected to produce that which when produced and set before him, he did not feel or understand. The genius for a particular thing does not imply taste in general or for other things, but it assuredly presupposes a taste or feeling for that particular thing. Salvator was so much offended with the *dryness, hardness,* &c. of Raphael, only because he was not struck, that is, did not sympathise with the divine mind within. If he had, he would have bowed as at a shrine, in spite of the homeliness or finicalness of the covering. Let no man build himself a spurious self-esteem on his contempt or indifference for acknowledged excellence. He will in the end pay dear for a momentary delusion: for the world will sooner or later discover those deficiencies in him, which render him insensible to all merits but his own.

Of all modes of acquiring distinction and, as it were, "getting the start of the majestic world," the most absurd as well as disgusting is that of setting aside the claims of others in the lump, and holding out our own particular excellence

or pursuit as the only one worth attending to. We thus set ourselves up as the standard of perfection, and treat every thing else that diverges from that standard as beneath our notice. At this rate, a contempt for any thing and a superiority to it are synonymous. It is a cheap and a short way of showing that we possess all excellence within ourselves, to deny the use or merit of all those qualifications that do not belong to us. According to such a mode of computation, it would appear that our value is to be estimated not by the number of acquirements that we *do* possess, but of those in which we are deficient and to which we are insensible: —so that we can at any time supply the place of wisdom and skill by a due proportion of ignorance, affectation, and conceit. If so, the dullest fellow, with impudence enough to despise what he does not understand, will always be the brightest genius and the greatest man. If stupidity is to be a substitute for taste, knowledge, and genius, any one may dogmatise and play the critic on this ground. We may easily make a monopoly of talent, if the torpedo-touch of our callous and wilful indifference is to neutralise all other pretensions. We have only to deny the advantages of others to make them our own: illiberality will carve out the way to

pre-eminence much better than toil or study or quickness of parts; and by narrowing our views and divesting ourselves at last of common feeling and humanity, we may arrogate every valuable accomplishment to ourselves, and exalt ourselves vastly above our fellow-mortals! That is, in other words, we have only to shut our eyes, in order to blot the sun out of heaven, and to annihilate whatever gives light or heat to the world, if it does not emanate from one single source, by spreading the cloud of our own envy, spleen, malice, want of comprehension, and prejudice over it. Yet how many are there who act upon this theory in good earnest, grow more bigoted to it every day, and not only become the dupes of it themselves, but by dint of gravity, by bullying and brow-beating, succeed in making converts of others!

A man is a political economist. Good: but this is no reason he should think there is nothing else in the world, or that every thing else is good for nothing. Let us suppose that this is the most important subject, and that being his favourite study, he is the best judge of that point, still it is not the only one—why then treat every other question or pursuit with disdain as insignificant and mean, or endeavour to put others who have devoted their whole time to it

out of conceit with that on which they depend for their amusement or (perhaps) subsistence? I see neither the wit, wisdom, nor good-nature of this mode of proceeding. Let him fill his library with books on this one subject, yet other persons are not bound to follow the example, and exclude every other topic from theirs—let him write, let him talk, let him think on nothing else, but let him not impose the same pedantic humour as a duty or a mark of taste on others—let him ride the high horse, and drag his heavy load of mechanical knowledge along the iron rail-way of the master-science, but let him not move out of it to taunt or jostle those who are jogging quietly along upon their several *hobbies*, who "owe him no allegiance," and care not one jot for his opinion. Yet we could forgive such a person, if he made it his boast that he had read Don Quixote twice through in the original Spanish, and preferred Lycidas to all Milton's smaller poems! What would Mr. ——— say to any one who should profess a contempt for political economy? He would answer very bluntly and very properly, "Then you know nothing about it." It is a pity that so sensible a man and close a reasoner should think of putting down other lighter and more elegant pursuits by professing a contempt

or indifference for them, which springs from precisely the same source, and is of just the same value. But so it is that there seems to be a tacit presumption of folly in whatever gives pleasure; while an air of gravity and wisdom hovers round the painful and pedantic!

A man comes into a room, and on his first entering, declares without preface or ceremony his contempt for poetry. Are we therefore to conclude him a greater genius than Homer? No: but by this cavalier opinion he assumes a certain natural ascendancy over those who admire poetry. To *look down* upon any thing seemingly implies a greater elevation and enlargement of view than to *look up* to it. The present Lord Chancellor took upon him to declare in open court that he would not go across the street to hear Madame Catalani sing. What did this prove? His want of an ear for music, not his capacity for any thing higher. So far as it went, it only showed him to be inferior to those thousands of persons who go with eager expectation to hear her, and come away with astonishment and rapture. A man might as well tell you he is deaf, and expect you to look at him with more respect. The want of any external sense or organ is an acknowledged defect and infirmity: the want

of an internal sense or faculty is equally so, though our self-love contrives to give a different turn to it. We mortify others by *throwing cold water* on that in which they have an advantage over us, or stagger their opinion of an excellence which is not of self-evident or absolute utility, and lessen its supposed value, by limiting the universality of a taste for it. Lord Eldon's protest on this occasion was the more extraordinary, as he is not only a good-natured but a successful man. These little spiteful allusions are most apt to proceed from disappointed vanity, and an apprehension that justice is not done to ourselves. By being at the top of a profession, we have leisure to look beyond it. Those who really excel and are allowed to excel in any thing have no excuse for trying to gain a reputation by undermining the pretensions of others; they stand on their own ground; and do not need the aid of invidious comparisons. Besides, the consciousness of excellence produces a fondness for, a faith in it. I should half suspect that any one could not be a great lawyer, who denied that Madame Catalani was a great singer. The Chancellor must dislike her decisive tone, the rapidity of her movements! The late Chancellor (Erskine) was a man of (at least) a different stamp. In the exuberance and

buoyancy of his animal spirits, he scattered the graces and ornaments of life over the dust and cobwebs of the law. What is there that is now left of him—what is there to redeem his foibles, or to recal the flush of early enthusiasm in his favour, or kindle one spark of sympathy in the breast, but his romantic admiration of Mrs. Siddons? There are those who, if you praise *Walton's Complete Angler*, sneer at it as a childish or old-womanish performance: some laugh at the amusement of fishing as silly, others carp at it as cruel; and Dr. Johnson said that "a fishing-rod was a stick with a hook at one end, and a fool at the other." I would rather take the word of one who had stood for days, up to his knees in water, and in the coldest weather, intent on this employ, who returned to it again with unabated relish, and who spent his whole life in the same manner without being weary of it at last. There is something in this more than Dr. Johnson's definition accounts for. A *fool* takes no interest in any thing; or if he does, it is better to be a fool, than a wise man, whose only pleasure is to disparage the pursuits and occupations of others, and out of ignorance or prejudice to condemn them, merely because they are not *his*.

Whatever interests, is interesting. I know

of no way of estimating the real value of objects in all their bearings and consequences, but I can tell at once their intellectual value by the degree of passion or sentiment the very idea and mention of them excites in the mind. To judge of things by reason or the calculations of positive utility is a slow, cold, uncertain, and barren process—their power of appealing to and affecting the imagination as subjects of thought and feeling is best measured by the habitual impression they leave upon the mind, and it is with this only we have to do in expressing our delight or admiration of them, or in setting a just mental value upon them. They ought to excite all the emotion which they do excite; for this is the instinctive and unerring result of the constant experience we have had of their power of affecting us, and of the associations that cling unconsciously to them. Fancy, feeling may be very inadequate tests of truth; but truth itself operates chiefly on the human mind through them. It is in vain to tell me that what excites the heart-felt sigh of youth, the tears of delight in age, and fills up the busy interval between with pleasing and lofty thoughts, is frivolous, or a waste of time, or of no use. You only by that give me a mean

opinion of your ideas of utility. The labour of years, the triumph of aspiring genius and consummate skill, is not to be put down by a cynical frown, by a supercilious smile, by an ignorant sarcasm. Things barely of use are subjects of professional skill and scientific inquiry: they must also be beautiful and pleasing to attract common attention, and be naturally and universally interesting. A pair of shoes is good to wear: a pair of sandals is a more picturesque object; and a statue or a poem are certainly good to think and talk about, which are part of the business of life. To think and speak of them with contempt is therefore a wilful and studied solecism. Pictures are good things to go and see. This is what people do; they do not expect to eat or make a dinner of them; but we sometimes want to fill up the time before dinner. The progress of civilisation and refinement is from instrumental to final causes; from supplying the wants of the body to providing luxuries for the mind. To stop at the *mechanical*, and refuse to proceed to the *fine arts*, or churlishly to reject all ornamental studies and elegant accomplishments as mean and trivial, because they only afford employment to the imagination, create food for thought, fur-

nish the mind, sustain the soul in health and enjoyment, is a rude and barbarous theory—

"Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas."

Before we absolutely condemn any thing, we ought to be able to show something better, not merely in itself, but in the same class. To know the best in each class infers a higher degree of taste; to reject the class is only a negation of taste; for different classes do not interfere with one another, nor can any one's *ipse dixit* be taken on so wide a question as abstract excellence. Nothing is truly and altogether despicable that excites angry contempt or warm opposition, since this always implies that some one else is of a different opinion, and takes an equal interest in it.

When I speak of what is interesting, however, I mean not only to a particular profession, but in general to others. Indeed, it is the very popularity and obvious interest attached to certain studies and pursuits, that excites the envy and hostile regard of graver and more recondite professions. Man is perhaps not naturally an egotist, or at least he is satisfied with his own particular line of excellence and the value that he supposes inseparable from it, till he comes into the world and finds it of so little account in the eyes of the vulgar; and he

then turns round and vents his chagrin and disappointment on those more attractive, but (as he conceives) superficial studies, which cost less labour and patience to understand them, and are of so much less use to society. The injustice done to ourselves makes us unjust to others. The man of science and the hard student (from this cause, as well as from a certain unbending hardness of mind) come at last to regard whatever is generally pleasing and striking as worthless and light, and to proportion their contempt to the admiration of others; while the artist, the poet, and the votary of pleasure and popularity treat the more solid and useful branches of human knowledge as disagreeable and dull. This is often carried to too great a length. It is enough that "wisdom is justified of her children:" the philosopher ought to smile, instead of being angry at the folly of mankind (if such it is), and those who find both pleasure and profit in adorning and polishing the airy "capitals" of science and of art, ought not to grudge those who toil underground at the foundation, the praise that is due to their patience and self-denial. There is a variety of tastes and capacities that requires all the variety of men's talents to administer to it. The less excellent must be provided for as well as the

more excellent. Those who are only capable of amusement ought to be amused. If all men were forced to be great philosophers and lasting benefactors of their species, how few of us could ever do any thing at all! But nature acts more impartially, though not improvidently. Wherever she bestows a *turn* for any thing on the individual, she implants a corresponding taste for it in others. We have only to "throw our bread upon the waters, and after many days we shall find it again." Let us do our best, and we need not be ashamed of the smallness of our talent, or afraid of the calumnies and contempt of envious maligners. When Goldsmith was talking one day to Sir Joshua of writing a fable in which little fishes were to be introduced, Dr. Johnson rolled about uneasily in his seat and began to laugh, on which Goldsmith said rather angrily—"Why do you laugh? If you were to write a fable for little fishes, you would make them speak like great whales!" The reproof was just. Johnson was in truth conscious of Goldsmith's superior inventiveness, and of the lighter graces of his pen, but he wished to reduce every thing to his own pompous and oracular style. There are not only *books for children*, but books for all ages and for both sexes. After we grow up to years of discre-

tion, we do not all become equally wise at once. Our own tastes change: the tastes of other individuals are still more different. It was said the other day, that "Thomson's Seasons would be read while there was a boarding-school girl in the world." If a thousand volumes were written against *Hervey's Meditations*, the Meditations would be read when the criticisms were forgotten. To the illiterate and vain, affectation and verbiage will always pass for fine writing, while the world stands. No woman ever liked Burke, or disliked Goldsmith. It is idle to set up an universal standard. There is a large class who, in spite of themselves, prefer Westall or Angelica Kauffman to Raphael; nor is it fit they should do otherwise. We may come to something like a fixed and exclusive standard of taste, if we confine ourselves to what will please the best judges, meaning thereby persons of the most refined and cultivated minds, and by persons of the most refined and cultivated minds, generally meaning *ourselves*!*

* The books that we like in youth we return to in age, if there is nature and simplicity in them. At what age should Robinson Crusoe be laid aside? I do not think that Don Quixote is a book for children; or at least, they understand it better as they grow up.

To return to the original question. I can conceive of nothing so little or ridiculous as pride. It is a mixture of insensibility and ill-nature, in which it is hard to say which has the largest share. If a man knows or excels in, or has ever studied any two things, I will venture to affirm he will be proud of neither. It is perhaps excusable for a person who is ignorant of all but one thing, to think *that* the sole excellence, and to be full of himself as the possessor. The way to cure him of this folly is to give him something else to be proud of. Vanity is a building that falls to the ground as you widen its foundation, or strengthen the props that should support it. The greater a man is, the less he necessarily thinks of himself, for his knowledge enlarges with his attainments. In himself he feels that he is nothing, a point, a speck in the universe, except as his mind reflects that universe, and as he enters into the infinite variety of truth, beauty, and power contained in it. Let any one be brought up among books, and taught to think words the only things, and he may conceive highly of himself from the proficiency he has made in language and in letters. Let him then be compelled to attempt some other pursuit—painting, for instance—and be made to feel the difficulties, the refinements of

which it is capable, and the number of things of which he was utterly ignorant before, and there will be an end of his pedantry and his pride together. Nothing but the want of comprehension of view or generosity of spirit can make any one fix on his own particular acquirement as the limit of all excellence. No one is (generally speaking) great in more than one thing—if he extends his pursuits, he dissipates his strength—yet in that one thing how small is the interval between him and the next in merit and reputation to himself! But he thinks nothing of, or scorns or loathes the name of his rival, so that all that the other possesses in common goes for nothing, and the fraction of a difference between them constitutes (in his opinion) the sum and substance of all that is excellent in the universe! Let a man be wise, and then let us ask, will his wisdom make him proud? Let him excel all others in the graces of the mind, has he also those of the body? He has the advantage of fortune, but has he also that of birth, or if he has both, has he health, strength, beauty in a supreme degree? Or have not others the same, or does he think all these nothing because he does not possess them? The proud man fancies that there is no one worth regarding but himself: he might as

well fancy there is no other being but himself. The one is not a greater stretch of madness than the other. To make pride justifiable, there ought to be but one proud man in the world, for if any one individual has a right to be so, nobody else has. So far from thinking ourselves superior to all the rest of the species, we cannot be sure that we are above the meanest and most despised individual of it: for he may have some virtue, some excellence, some source of happiness or usefulness within himself, which may redeem all other disadvantages: or even if he is without any such hidden worth, this is not a subject of exultation, but of regret, to any one tinctured with the smallest humanity, and he who is totally devoid of the latter, cannot have much reason to be proud of any thing else. Arkwright, who invented the spinning-jenny, for many years kept a paltry barber's shop in a provincial town: yet at that time that wonderful machinery was working in his brain, which has added more to the wealth and resources of this country than all the pride of ancestry or insolence of upstart nobility for the last hundred years. We should be cautious whom we despise. If we do not know them, we can have no right to pronounce a hasty sentence: if we do, they may espy some

few defects in us. *No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre.* What is it then that makes the difference? The dress and pride. But he is the most of a hero who is least distinguished by the one, and most free from the other. If we enter into conversation upon equal terms with the lowest of the people, unrestrained by circumstance, unawed by interest, we shall find in ourselves but little superiority over them. If we know what they do not, they know what we do not. In general, those who do things for others, know more about them than those for whom they are done. A groom knows more about horses than his master. He rides them too: but the one rides behind, the other before! Hence the number of forms and ceremonies that have been invented to keep the magic circle of fancied self-importance inviolate. The late King sought but one interview with Dr. Johnson: his present Majesty is never tired of the company of Mr. Croker.

The collision of truth or genius naturally gives a shock to the pride of exalted rank: the great and mighty usually seek out the dregs of mankind, buffoons and flatterers, for their pampered self-love to repose on. Pride soon tires of every thing but its shadow, servility: but how poor a triumph is that which exists only

by excluding all rivalry, however remote. He who invites competition (the only test of merit), who challenges fair comparisons, and weighs different claims, is alone possessed of manly ambition; but will not long continue vain or proud. Pride is "a cell of ignorance; travelling a-bed." If we look at all out of ourselves, we must see how far short we are of what we would be thought. The man of genius is poor*; the rich man is not a lord: the lord wants to be a king: the king is uneasy to be a tyrant or a God. Yet he alone, who could claim this last character upon earth, gave his life a ransom

* I do not speak of poverty as an absolute evil; though when accompanied with luxurious habits and vanity, it is a great one. Even hardships and privations have their use, and give strength and endurance. Labour renders ease delightful—hunger is the best sauce. The peasant, who at noon rests from his weary task under a hawthorn hedge, and eats his slice of coarse bread and cheese or rusty bacon, enjoys more real luxury than the prince with pampered, listless appetite under a canopy of state. Why then does the mind of man pity the former, and envy the latter? It is because the imagination changes places with others in situation only, not in feeling; and in fancying ourselves the peasant, we revolt at his homely fare, from not being possessed of his gross taste or keen appetite, while in thinking of the prince, we suppose ourselves to sit down to his delicate viands and sumptuous board, with a relish unabated by long habit and vicious excess. I am not sure whether Mandeville has not given the same answer to this hackneyed question.

for others! The dwarf in the romance, who saw the shadows of the fairest and the mightiest among the sons of men pass before him, that he might assume the shape he liked best, had only his choice of wealth, or beauty, or valour, or power. But could he have clutched them all, and melted them into one essence of pride, the triumph would not have been lasting. Could vanity take all pomp and power to itself, could it, like the rainbow, span the earth, and seem to prop the heavens, after all it would be but the wonder of the ignorant, the pageant of a moment. The fool who dreams that he is great should first forget that he is a man, and before he thinks of being proud, should pray to be mad!—The only great man in modern times, that is, the only man who rose in deeds and fame to the level of antiquity, who might turn his gaze upon himself, and wonder at his height, for on him all eyes were fixed as his majestic stature towered above thrones and monuments of renown, died the other day in exile, and in lingering agony; and we still see fellows strutting about the streets, and fancying they are something!

Personal vanity is incompatible with the great and the *ideal.* He who has not seen, or thought, of read of something finer than him-

self, has seen, or read, or thought little; and he who has, will not be always looking in the glass of his own vanity. Hence poets, artists, and men of genius in general, are seldom coxcombs, but often slovens; for they find something out of themselves better worth studying than their own persons. They have an imaginary standard in their minds, with which ordinary features (even their own) will not bear a comparison, and they turn their thoughts another way. If a man had a face like one of Raphael's or Titian's heads, he might be proud of it, but not else; and, even then, he would be stared at as a *non-descript* by "the universal English nation." Few persons who have seen the Antinous or the Theseus will be much charmed with their own beauty or symmetry; nor will those who understand the *costume* of the antique, or Vandyke's dresses, spend much time in decking themselves out in all the deformity of the prevailing fashion. A coxcomb is his own lay-figure, for want of any better models to employ his time and imagination upon.

There is an inverted sort of pride, the reverse of that egotism that has been above described, and which, because it cannot be every thing, is dissatisfied with every thing. A person who is liable to this infirmity, "thinks

nothing done, while any thing remains to be done." The sanguine egotist prides himself on what he can do or possesses, the morbid egotist despises himself for what he wants, and is ever going out of his way to attempt hopeless and impossible tasks. The effect in either case is not at all owing to reason, but to temperament. The one is as easily depressed by what mortifies his latent ambition, as the other is elated by what flatters his immediate vanity. There are persons whom no success, no advantages, no applause can satisfy, for they dwell only on failure and defeat. They constantly "forget the things that are behind, and press forward to the things that are before." The greatest and most decided acquisitions would not indemnify them for the smallest deficiency. They go beyond the old motto—*Aut Cæsar, aut nihil*—they not only want to be at the head of whatever they undertake, but if they succeed in that, they immediately want to be at the head of something else, no matter how gross or trivial. The charm that rivets their affections is not the importance or reputation annexed to the new pursuit, but its novelty or difficulty. That must be a wonderful accomplishment indeed, which baffles their skill—nothing is with them of any value but as it gives scope to their

restless activity of mind, their craving after an uneasy and importunate state of excitement. To them the pursuit is every thing, the possession nothing. I have known persons of this stamp, who, with every reason to be satisfied with their success in life, and with the opinion entertained of them by others, despised themselves because they could not do something which they were not bound to do, and which, if they could have done it, would not have added one jot to their respectability, either in their own eyes or those of any one else, the very insignificance of the attainment irritating their impatience, for it is the humour of such dispositions to argue, "If they cannot succeed in what is trifling and contemptible, how should they succeed in any thing else?" If they could make the circuit of the arts and sciences, and master them all, they would take to some mechanical exercise, and if they failed, be as discontented as ever. All that they can do vanishes out of sight the moment it is within their grasp, and "nothing is, but what is not." A poet of this description is ambitious of the thews and muscles of a prize fighter, and thinks himself nothing without them. A prose-writer would be a fine tennis-player, and is thrown into despair because he is not one, without considering that it requires a whole life

devoted to the game to excel in it; and that, even if he could dispense with this apprenticeship, he would still be just as much bound to excel in rope-dancing, or horsemanship, or playing at cup and ball like the Indian jugglers, all which is impossible. This feeling is a strange mixture of modesty and pride. We think nothing of what we are, because we cannot be every thing with a wish. Goldsmith was even jealous of beauty in the other sex, and the same character is attributed to Wharton by Pope:

> "Though listening senates hung on all he spoke,
> The club must hail him master of the joke."

Players are for going into the church—officers in the army turn players. For myself, do what I might, I should think myself a poor creature unless I could beat a boy of ten years old at chuck-farthing, or an elderly gentlewoman at piquet!

The extreme of fastidious discontent and repining is as bad as that of over-weening presumption. We ought to be satisfied if we have succeeded in any one thing, or with having done our best. Any thing more is for health and amusement, and should be resorted to as a source of pleasure, not of fretful impatience, and endless pity, self-imposed mortification. Perhaps

the jealous, uneasy temperament is most favourable to continued exertion and improvement, if it does not lead us to fritter away attention on too many pursuits. By looking out of ourselves, we gain knowledge: by being little satisfied with what we have done, we are less apt to sink into indolence and security. To conclude with a piece of egotism: I never begin one of these *Essays* with a consciousness of having written a line before; and having got to the end of the volume, hope never to look into it again.

ESSAY XVI.

HOT AND COLD.

——"Hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce,
Strive here for mastery."—MILTON.

"THE Protestants are much cleaner than the Catholics," said a shopkeeper of Vevey to me. "They are so," I replied, "but why should they?" A prejudice appeared to him a matter-of-fact, and he did not think it necessary to assign reasons for a matter-of-fact. That is not my way. He had not bottomed his proposition on proofs, nor rightly defined it.

Nearly the same remark, as to the extreme cleanliness of the people in this part of the country, had occurred to me as soon as I got to Brigg, where however the inhabitants are Catholics. So the original statement requires some qualification as to the mode of enunciation. I had no sooner arrived in this village, which is situated just under the Simplon, and where you are surrounded with *glaciers* and *goitres*, than

the genius of the place struck me on looking out at the pump under my window the next morning, where the "neat-handed Phyllises" were washing their greens in the water, that not a caterpillar could crawl on them, and scouring their pails and tubs that not a stain should be left in them. The raw, clammy feeling of the air was in unison with the scene. I had not seen such a thing in Italy. They have there no delight in splashing and dabbling in fresh streams and fountains—they have a dread of ablutions and abstersions, almost amounting to *hydrophobia*. Heat has an antipathy in nature to cold. The sanguine Italian is chilled and shudders at the touch of cold water, while the Helvetian boor, whose humours creep through his veins like the dank mists along the sides of his frozen mountains, is "native and endued unto that element." Here every thing is purified and filtered: there it is baked and burnt up, and sticks together in a most amicable union of filth and laziness. There is a little mystery and a little contradiction in the case—let us try if we cannot get rid of both by means of caution and daring together. It is not that the difference of latitude between one side of the Alps and the other can signify much: but the phlegmatic blood of their German ancestors

is poured down the valleys of the Swiss like water, and *iced* in its progress; whereas that of the Italians, besides its vigorous origin, is enriched and ripened by basking in more genial plains. A single Milanese market-girl (to go no farther south) appeared to me to have more blood in her body, more fire in her eye (as if the sun had made a burning *lens* of it), more spirit and probably more mischief about her than all the nice, *tidy*, good-looking, hard-working girls I have seen in Switzerland. To turn this physiognomical observation to a metaphysical account, I should say then that Northern people are clean and Southern people dirty as a general rule, because where the principle of life is more cold, weak, and impoverished, there is a greater shyness and aversion to come in contact with external matter (with which it does not so easily amalgamate), a greater fastidiousness and delicacy in choosing its sensations, a greater desire to know surrounding objects and to keep them clear of each other, than where this principle being more warm and active, it may be supposed to absorb outward impressions in itself, to melt them into its own essence, to impart its own vital impulses to them, and in fine, instead of shrinking from every thing, to be shocked at nothing. The Southern temperament is (so to

speak) more sociable with matter, more gross, impure, indifferent, from relying on its own strength; while that opposed to it, from being less able to react on external applications, is obliged to be more cautious and particular as to the kind of excitement to which it renders itself liable. Hence the timidity, reserve, and occasional hypocrisy of Northern manners; the boldness, freedom, levity, and frequent licentiousness of Southern ones. It would be too much to say, that if there is any thing of which a genuine Italian has a horror, it is of cleanliness; or that if there is any thing which seems ridiculous to a thorough-bred Italian woman, it is modesty: but certainly the degree to which nicety is carried by some people is a *bore* to an Italian imagination, as the excess of delicacy which is pretended or practised by some women is quite incomprehensible to the females of the South. It is wrong, however, to make the greater confidence or forwardness of manners an absolute test of morals: the love of virtue is a different thing from the fear or even hatred of vice. The squeamishness and prudery in the one case have a more plausible appearance; but it does not follow that there may not be more native goodness and even habitual refinement in the other, though accompanied with

stronger nerves and a less morbid imagination. But to return to the first question*.—I can readily understand how a Swiss peasant should stand a whole morning at a pump, washing cabbages, cauliflowers, sallads, and getting rid half a dozen times over of the sand, dirt, and insects they contain, because I myself should not only be *gravelled* by meeting with the one at table, but should be in horrors at the other. A Frenchman or an Italian would be thrown into convulsions of laughter at this superfluous delicacy, and would think his repast enriched or none the worse for such additions. The reluctance to prey on life, or on what once had it, seems to arise from a sense of incongruity, from the repugnance between life and death—from the cold, clammy feeling which belongs to the one, and which is enhanced by the contrast to its former warm, lively state, and by the circumstance of its being taken into the mouth, and devoured as food. Hence the desire to get rid of the idea of the living animal even in ordinary cases by all the disguises of cookery, of boiled and roast, and by the artifice of changing

* Women abroad (generally speaking) are more like men in the tone of their conversation and habits of thinking, so that from the same premises you cannot draw the same conclusions as in England.

the name of the animal into something different when it becomes food*. Hence sportsmen are not devourers of game, and hence the aversion to kill the animals we eat†. There is a contradiction between the animate and the inanimate, which is felt as matter of peculiar annoyance by the more cold and congealed temperament which cannot so well pass from one to the other; but this objection is easily swallowed by the inhabitant of gayer and more luxurious regions, who is so full of life himself that he can at once impart it to all that comes in his way, or never troubles himself about the difference. So the Neapolitan bandit takes the life of his victim

* This circumstance is noticed in Ivanhoe, though a different turn is given to it by the philosopher of Rotherwood.

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba in the same tone, "there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet, while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou; but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf too becomes Monsieur de Veau in like manner: he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."—Vol. 1, Chap. I.

† Hence the peculiar horror of cannibalism from the stronger sympathy with our own sensations, and the greater violence that is done to it by the sacrilegious use of what once possessed human life and feeling.

with little remorse, because he has enough and to spare in himself: his pulse still beats warm and vigorous, while the blood of a more humane native of the frozen North would run cold with horror at the sight of the stiffened corse, and this makes him pause before he stops in another the gushing source, of which he has such feeble supplies in himself. The wild Arab of the Desert can hardly entertain the idea of death, neither dreading it for himself nor regretting it for others. The Italians, Spaniards, and people of the South swarm alive without being sick or sorry at the circumstance; they hunt the accustomed prey in each other's tangled locks openly in the streets and on the highways, without manifesting shame or repugnance: combs are an invention of our Northern climes. Now I can comprehend this, when I look at the dirty, dingy, greasy, sun-burnt complexion of an Italian peasant or beggar, whose body seems alive all over with a sort of tingling, oily sensation, so that from any given particle of his shining skin to the beast "whose name signifies love" the transition is but small. This populousness is not unaccountable where all teems with life, where all is glowing and in motion, and every pore thrills with an exuberance of feeling. Not so in the dearth of life and spirit,

in the drossy, dry, material texture, the clear complexions and fair hair of the Saxon races, where the puncture of an insect's sting is a solution of their personal identity, and the idea of life attached to and courting an intimacy with them in spite of themselves, naturally produces all the revulsions of the most violent antipathy and nearly drives them out of their wits. How well the smooth ivory comb and auburn hair agree—while the Greek *dandy,* on entering a room, applies his hand to brush a cloud of busy stragglers from his hair like powder, and gives himself no more concern about them than about the motes dancing in the sun-beams! The dirt of the Italians is as it were baked into them, and so ingrained as to become a part of themselves, and occasion no discontinuity of their being.

I can forgive the dirt and sweat of a gipsey under a hedge, when I consider that the earth is his mother, the sun is his father. He hunts vermin for food: he is himself hunted like vermin for prey. His existence is not one of choice, but of necessity. The hungry Arab devours the raw shoulder of a horse. This again I can conceive. His feverish blood seethes it, and the virulence of his own breath carries off the disagreeableness of the smell. I do not see that the horse should be reckoned among un-

clean animals, according to any notions I have of the matter. The dividing of the hoof or the contrary, I should think, has not any thing to do with the question. I can understand the distinction between beasts of prey and the herbivorous and domestic animals, but the horse is tame. The natural distinction between clean and unclean animals (which has been sometimes made into a religious one) I take to depend on two circumstances, viz. the claws and bristly hide, which generally, though not always, go together. One would not wish to be torn in pieces instead of making a comfortable meal, "to be supped upon" where we thought of supping. With respect to the wolf, the tiger, and other animals of the same species, it seems a question which of us should devour the other: this baulks our appetite by distracting our attention, and we have so little relish for being eaten ourselves, or for the fangs and teeth of these shocking animals, that it gives us a distaste for their whole bodies. The horror we conceive at preying upon them arises in part from the fear we had of being preyed upon by them. No such apprehension crosses the mind with respect to the deer, the sheep, the hare—"here all is conscience and tender heart." These gentle creatures (whom we compliment

as useful) offer no resistance to the knife, and there is therefore nothing shocking or repulsive in the idea of devoting them to it. There is no confusion of ideas, but a beautiful simplicity and uniformity in our relation to each other, we as the slayers, they as the slain. A perfect understanding subsists on the subject. The hair of animals of prey is also strong and bristly, and forms an obstacle to our Epicurean designs. The calf or fawn is sleek and smooth: the bristles on a dog's or a cat's back are like "the quills upon the fretful porcupine," a very impracticable repast to the imagination, that stick in the throat and turn the stomach. Who has not read and been edified by the account of the supper in Gil Blas? Besides, there is also in all probability the practical consideration urged by Voltaire's traveller, who being asked "which he preferred—black mutton or white?" replied, "Either, provided it was tender." The greater rankness in the flesh is however accompanied by a corresponding irritability of surface, a tenaciousness, a pruriency, a soreness to attack, and not that fine, round, pampered passiveness to impressions which cuts up into handsome joints and entire pieces without any fidgetty process, and with an obvious view to solid, wholesome nourishment. Swine's flesh, the abomination

of the Jewish law, certainly comes under the objection here stated; and the bear with its shaggy fur is only smuggled into the Christian larder as half-brother to the wild boar, and because from its lazy, lumpish character and appearance, it seems matter of indifference whether it eats or is eaten. The horse, with sleek round haunches, is fair game, except from custom; and I think I could survive having swallowed part of an ass's foal without being utterly loathsome to myself*. Mites in a rotten cheese are endurable, from being so small and dry that they are scarce distinguishable from the atoms of the cheese itself, "so drossy and divisible are they:"

* Thomas Cooper of Manchester, the able logician and political partisan, tried the experiment some years ago, when he invited a number of gentlemen and officers quartered in the town to dine with him on an ass's foal instead of a calf's-head, on the anniversary of the 30th of January. The circumstance got wind, and gave great offence. Mr. Cooper had to attend a county-meeting soon after at Boulton-le-Moors, and one of the country magistrates coming to the inn for the same purpose, and when he asked "If any one was in the room?" receiving for answer—"No one but Mr. Cooper of Manchester" —ordered out his horse and immediately rode home again. Some verses made on the occasion by Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Shepherd of Gateacre explained the story thus—

"The reason how this came to pass is
The Justice had heard that Cooper ate asses!"

but the Lord deliver me from their more thriving next-door neighbours! Animals that are made use of as food should either be so small as to be imperceptible, or else we should dig into the quarry of life, hew away the masses, and not leave the form standing to reproach us with our gluttony and cruelty. I hate to see a rabbit trussed, or a hare brought to table in the form which it occupied while living: they seem to me apparitions of the burrowers in the earth or the rovers in the wood, sent to scare away appetite. One reason why toads and serpents are disgusting, is from the way in which they run against or suddenly cling to the skin: the encountering them causes a solution of continuity, and we shudder to feel a life which is not ours in contact with us. It is this disjointed or imperfect sympathy which in the recoil produces the greatest antipathy. Sterne asks why a sword, which takes away life, may be named without offence, though other things, which contribute to perpetuate it, cannot? Because the idea in the one case is merely painful, and there is no mixture of the agreeable to lead the imagination on to a point from which it must make a precipitate retreat. The morally indecent arises from the doubtful conflict between temptation and duty: the physically revolting is the

product of alternate attraction and repulsion, of partial adhesion, or of something that is foreign to us sticking closer to our persons than we could wish. The nastiest tastes and smells are not the most pungent and painful, but a compound of sweet and bitter, of the agreeable and disagreeable; where the sense, having been relaxed and rendered effeminate as it were by the first, is unable to contend with the last, faints and sinks under it, and has no way of relieving itself but by violently throwing off the load that oppresses it. Hence loathing and sickness. But these hardly ever arise without something contradictory or *impure* in the objects, or unless the mind, having been invited and prepared to be gratified at first, this expectation is turned to disappointment and disgust. Mere pains, mere pleasures do not have this effect, save from an excess of the first causing insensibility and then a faintness ensues, or of the last, causing what is called a surfeit. Sea-sickness has some analogy to this. It comes on with that unsettled motion of the ship, which takes away the ordinary footing or firm hold we have of things, and by relaxing our perceptions, unbraces the whole nervous system. The giddiness and swimming of the head on looking down a precipice, when we are ready with every breath of

imagination to topple down into the abyss, has its source in the same uncertain and rapid whirl of the fancy through possible extremes. Thus we find that for cases of *fainting*, sea-sickness, &c. a glass of brandy is recommended as "*the* sovereign'st thing on earth," because by grappling with the coats of the stomach and bringing our sensations to a *focus*, it does away that nauseous fluctuation and suspense of feeling which is the root of the mischief. I do not know whether I make myself intelligible, for the utmost I can pretend is to suggest some very subtle and remote analogies: but if I have at all succeeded in opening up the train of argument I intend, it will at least be possible to conceive how the sanguine Italian is less nice in his intercourse with material objects, less startled at incongruities, less liable to take offence, than the more literal and conscientious German, because the more headstrong current of his own sensations fills up the gaps and "makes the odds all even." He does not care to have his cabbages and sallads washed ten times over, or his beds cleared of vermin: he can lend or borrow satisfaction from all objects indifferently. The air over his head is full of life, of the hum of insects; the grass under his feet rings and is loud with the cry of the grasshopper; innu-

merable green lizards dart from the rocks and sport before him: what signifies it if any living creature approaches nearer his own person, where all is one vital glow? The Indian even twines the forked serpent round his hand unharmed, copper-coloured like it, his veins as heated; and the Brahmin cherishes life and disregards his own person as an act of his religion—the religion of fire and of the sun! Yet how shall we reconcile to this theory the constant ablutions (five times a day) of the Eastern nations, and the squalid customs of some Northern people, the dirtiness of the Russians and of the Scotch? Superstition may perhaps account for the one, and poverty and barbarism for the other*.

Laziness has a great deal to do in the question, and this again is owing to a state of feeling sufficient to itself, and rich in enjoyment without the help of action. Clothilde (the finest and darkest of the Gensano girls) fixes herself at her

* What a plague Moses had with his Jews to make them "reform and live cleanly!" To this day (according to a learned traveller) the Jews, wherever scattered, have an aversion to agriculture and almost to its products; and a Jewish girl will refuse to accept a flower—if you offer her a piece of money, of jewellery or embroidery, she knows well enough what to make of the proffered courtesy. See *Hacquet's Travels in Carpathia*, &c.

door about noon (when her day's work is done): her smile reflects back the brightness of the sun, she darts upon a little girl with a child in her arms, nearly overturns both, devours it with kisses, and then resumes her position at the door, with her hands behind her back and her shoes down at heel. This slatternliness and negligence is the more remarkable in so fine a girl, and one whose ordinary costume is a gorgeous picture, but it is a part of the character; her dress would never have been so rich, if she could take more pains about it—they have no nervous or fidgetty feeling whether a thing is coming off or not: all their sensations, as it were, sit loose upon them. Their clothes are no part of themselves,—they even fling their limbs about as if they scarcely belonged to them; the heat in summer requires the utmost freedom and airiness (which becomes a habit), and they have nothing tight-bound or strait-laced about their minds or bodies. The same girl in winter (for "dull, cold winter *does* inhabit here" also) would have a *scaldaletto* (an earthen pan with coals in it) dangling at her wrists for four months together, without any sense of incumbrance or distraction, or any other feeling but of the heat it communicated to her hands. She does not mind its chilling the rest of her body

or disfiguring her hands, making her fingers look like "long purples"—these children of nature "take the good the Gods provide them," and trouble themselves little about consequences or appearances. Their self-will is much stronger than their vanity—they have as little curiosity about others as concern for their good opinion. Two Italian peasants talking by the roadside will not so much as turn their heads to look at an English carriage that is passing. They have no interest except in what is personal, sensual. Hence they have as little tenaciousness on the score of property as in the acquisition of ideas. They want neither. Their good spirits are food, clothing, and books to them. They are fond of comfort too, but their notion of it differs from ours—ours consists in accumulating the means of enjoyment, theirs in being free to enjoy, in the dear *far niente*. What need have they to encumber themselves with furniture or wealth or business, when all they require (for the most part) is air, a bunch of grapes, bread, and stone-walls? The Italians, generally speaking, have nothing, do nothing, want nothing,—to the surprise of foreigners, who ask how they live? The men are too lazy to be thieves, the women to be something else. The dependence of the Swiss and English on

their comforts, that is, on all "appliances and means to boot," as helps to enjoyment or hindrances to annoyance, makes them not only eager to procure different objects of accommodation and luxury, but makes them take such pains in their preservation and embellishment, and *pet* them so when acquired. "A man," says Yorick, "finds an apple, spits upon it, and calls it his." The more any one finds himself clinging to material objects for existence or gratification, the more he will take a personal interest in them, and the more will he clean, repair, polish, scrub, scour, and tug at them without end, as if it were his own soul that he was keeping clear from spot or blemish. A Swiss dairy-maid scours the very heart out of a wooden pail; a scullion washes the taste as well as the worms out of a dish of brocoli. The wenches are in like manner neat and clean in their own persons, but insipid. The most coarse and ordinary furniture in Switzerland has more pains bestowed upon it to keep it in order, than the finest works of art in Italy. There the pictures are suffered to moulder on the walls; and the Claudes in the Doria Palace at Rome are black with age and dirt. We set more store by them in England, where we have scarce any other sunshine! At the common inns on this

side the Simplon, the very sheets have a character for whiteness to lose: the rods and testers of the beds are like a peeled wand. On the opposite side you are thankful when you are not shown into an apartment resembling a three-stalled stable, with horse-cloths for coverlids to hide the dirt, and beds of horse-hair or withered leaves as harbourage for vermin. The more, the merrier; the dirtier, the warmer; live and let live, seem maxims inculcated by the climate. Wherever things are not kept carefully apart from foreign admixtures and contamination, the distinctions of property itself will not, I conceive, be held exceedingly sacred. This feeling is strong as the passions are weak. A people that are remarkable for cleanliness, will be so for industry, for honesty, for avarice, and *vice versâ*. The Italians cheat, steal, rob (when they think it worth their while to do so) with licensed impunity: the Swiss, who feel the value of property, and labour incessantly to acquire it, are afraid to lose it. At Brigg I first heard the cry of watchmen at night, which I had not heard for many months. I was reminded of the traveller who after wandering in remote countries saw a gallows near at hand, and knew by this circumstance that he approached the confines of civilization. The police in Italy is

both secret and severe, but it is directed chiefly to political and not to civil matters. Patriot sighs are heaved unheard in the dungeons of St. Angelo: the Neapolitan bandit breathes the free air of his native mountains!

It may by this time be conjectured why Catholics are less cleanly than Protestants, because in fact they are less scrupulous, and swallow whatever is set before them in matters of faith as well as other things. Protestants, as such, are captious and scrutinising, try to pick holes and find fault,—have a dry, meagre, penurious imagination. Catholics are buoyed up over doubts and difficulties by a greater redundance of fancy, and make religion subservient to a sense of enjoyment. The one are for detecting and weeding out all corruptions and abuses in doctrine or worship: the others enrich theirs with the dust and cobwebs of antiquity, and think their ritual none the worse for the tarnish of age. Those of the Catholic Communion are willing to take it for granted that every thing is right; the professors of the Reformed religion have a pleasure in believing that every thing is wrong, in order that they may have to set it right. In morals, again, Protestants are more precise than their Catholic brethren. The creed of the latter absolves them of half their duties, of all

those that are a clog on their inclinations, atones for all slips, and patches up all deficiencies. But though this may make them less censorious and sour, I am not sure that it renders them less in earnest in the part they do perform. When more is left to freedom of choice, perhaps the service that is voluntary will be purer and more effectual. That which is not so may as well be done by proxy; or if it does not come from the heart, may be suffered to exhale merely from the lips. If less is owing in this case to a dread of vice and fear of shame, more will proceed from a love of virtue, free from the least sinister construction. It is asserted that Italian women are more gross; I can believe it, and that they are at the same time more refined than others. Their religion is in the same manner more sensual: but is it not to the full as visionary and imaginative as any? I have heard Italian women say things that others would not—it does not therefore follow that they would do them: partly because the knowledge of vice that makes it familiar renders it indifferent; and because the same masculine tone of thinking that enables them to confront vice, may raise them above it into a higher sphere of sentiment. If their senses are more inflammable, their passions (and their love of

virtue and of religion among the rest) may glow with proportionable ardour. Indeed the truest virtue is that which is least susceptible of contamination from its opposite. I may admire a Raphael, and yet not swoon at sight of a daub. Why should there not be the same taste in morals as in pictures or poems? Granting that vice has more votaries here, at least it has fewer mercenary ones, and this is no trifling advantage. As to manners, the Catholics must be allowed to carry it over all the world. The better sort not only say nothing to give you pain; they say nothing of others that it would give them pain to hear repeated. Scandal and tittle-tattle are long banished from good society. After all, to be wise is to be humane. What would our English *blue-stockings* say to this? The fault and the excellence of Italian society is, that the shocking or disagreeable is not supposed to have an existence in the nature of things*.

* The dirt and comparative want of conveniences among Catholics is often attributed to the number of their Saints' days and festivals, which divert them from labour, and give them an idle and disorderly turn of mind.

ESSAY XVII.

THE NEW SCHOOL OF REFORM.

ESSAY XVII.

THE NEW SCHOOL OF REFORM;

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A RATIONALIST AND A SENTIMENTALIST.

R. WHAT is it you so particularly object to this school? Is there any thing so very obnoxious in the doctrine of Utility, which they profess? Or in the design to bring about the greatest possible good by the most efficacious and disinterested means?

S. Disinterested enough, indeed: since their plan seems to be to sacrifice every individual comfort for the good of the whole. Can they find out no better way of making human life run smooth and pleasant, than by drying up the brain and curdling the blood? I do not want society to resemble a *Living Skeleton*, whatever these "Job's Comforters" may do. They are like the fox in the fable—they have no feeling themselves, and would persuade others to do without it. Take away the *dulce* of the poet,

and I do not see what is to become of the *utile*. It is the common error of the human mind, of forgetting the end in the means.

R. I see you are at your *Sentimentalities* again. Pray, tell me, is it not their having applied this epithet to some of your favourite speculations, that has excited this sudden burst of spleen against them?

S. At least I cannot retort this phrase on those printed *circulars* which they throw down areas and fasten under knockers. But pass on for that. Answer me then, what is there agreeable or ornamental in human life that they do not explode with fanatic rage? What is there sordid and cynical that they do not eagerly catch at? What is there that delights others that does not disgust them? What that disgusts others with which they are not delighted? I cannot think that this is owing to philosophy, but to a sinister bias of mind; inasmuch as a marked deficiency of temper is a more obvious way of accounting for certain things than an entire superiority of understanding. The Ascetics of old thought they were doing God good service by tormenting themselves and denying others the most innocent amusements. Who doubts now that in this (armed as they were with texts and authorities and awful denunciations) they

were really actuated by a morose and envious disposition, that had no capacity for enjoyment itself or felt a malicious repugnance to the idea of it in any one else? What in them took the garb of religion, with us puts on the semblance of philosophy; and instead of dooming the heedless and refractory to hell-fire or the terrors of purgatory, our modern polemics set their disciples in the stocks of Utility, or throw all the elegant arts and amiable impulses of humanity into the Limbo of Political Economy.

R. I cannot conceive what possible connection there can be between the weak and mischievous enthusiasts you speak of, and the most enlightened reasoners of the nineteenth century. They would laugh at such a comparison.

S. Self-knowledge is the last thing which I should lay to the charge of *soi-disant* philosophers; but a man may be a bigot without a particle of religion, a monk or an Inquisitor in a plain coat and professing the most liberal opinions.

R. You still deal, as usual, in idle sarcasms and flimsy generalities. Will you descend to particulars, and state facts before you draw inferences from them?

S. In the first place then, they are mostly Scotchmen—lineal descendants of the Cove-

nanters and Cameronians, and inspired with the true John Knox zeal for mutilating and defacing the carved work of the sanctuary—

R. Hold, hold—this is vulgar prejudice and personality—

S. But it's the fact, and I thought you called for facts. Do you imagine if I hear a fellow in Scotland abusing the Author of Waverley, who has five hundred hearts beating in his bosom, because there is no Religion in his works, and a fellow in Westminster doing the same thing because there is no Political Economy in them, that any thing will prevent me from supposing that this is virtually the same Scotch pedlar with his pack of Utility at his back, whether he deal in tape and stays or in drawling compilations of history and reviews?

R. I did not know you had such an affection for Sir Walter——

S. I said the *Author of Waverley.* Not to like him would be not to love myself or human nature, of which he has given so many interesting specimens: though for the sake of that same human nature, I have no liking to Sir Walter. Those "few and recent writers," on the contrary, who by their own account "have discovered the true principles of the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers," are easily

reconciled to the Tory and the bigot, because they here feel a certain superiority over him; but they cannot forgive the great historian of life and manners, because he has enlarged our sympathy with human happiness beyond their pragmatical limits. They are not even "good haters:" for they hate not what degrades and afflicts, but what consoles and elevates the mind. Their plan is to *block out* human happiness wherever they see a practicable opening to it.

R. But perhaps their notions of happiness differ from yours. They think it should be regulated by the doctrine of Utility. Whatever is incompatible with this, they regard as spurious and false, and scorn all base compromises and temporary palliatives.

S. Yes; just as the religious fanatic thinks there is no salvation out of the pale of his own communion, and damns without scruple every appearance of virtue and piety beyond it. Poor David Deans! how would he have been surprised to see all his follies—his "right-hand defections and his left-hand compliances," and his contempt for human learning, blossom again in a knot of sophists and professed *illuminés!* Such persons are not to be treated as philosophers and metaphysicians, but as conceited sec-

taries and ignorant mechanics. In neither case is the intolerant and proscribing spirit a deduction of pure reason, indifferent to consequences, but the dictate of presumption, prejudice, and spiritual pride, or a strong desire in the ELECT to narrow the privilege of salvation to as small a circle as possible, and in "a few and recent writers" to have the whole field of happiness and argument to themselves. The enthusiasts of old did all they could to strike the present existence from under our feet to give us another—to annihilate our natural affections and worldly vanities, so as to conform us to the likeness of God: the modern sciolists offer us Utopia in lieu of our actual enjoyments; for warm flesh and blood would give us a head of clay and a heart of steel, and conform us to their own likeness—"a consummation not very devoutly to be wished!" Where is the use of getting rid of the trammels of superstition and slavery, if we are immediately to be handed over to these new ferrets and inspectors of a *Police-Philosophy;* who pay domiciliary visits to the human mind, catechise an expression, impale a sentiment, put every enjoyment to the rack, leave you not a moment's ease or respite, and imprison all the faculties in a round of cant-phrases—the Shibboleth of a party? They are far from indulging or even

tolerating the strain of exulting enthusiasm expressed by Spenser :—

> " What more felicity can fall to creature
> Than to enjoy delight with liberty,
> And to be lord of all the works of nature ?
> To reign in the air from earth to highest sky,
> To feed on flowers and weeds of glorious feature,
> To taste whatever thing doth please the eye ?
> Who rests not pleased with such happiness,
> Well worthy he to taste of wretchedness !"

Without air or light, they grope their way under-ground, till they are made " fierce with dark keeping*:" their attention, confined to the same dry, hard, mechanical subjects, which they have not the power nor the will to exchange for others, frets and corrodes; and soured and disappointed, they wreak their spite and mortification on all around them.

R. I cannot but think your imagination runs away with your candour. Surely the writers you are so ready to inveigh against labour hard to correct errors and reform grievances.

S. Yes; because the one affords exercise for their vanity, and the other for their spleen. They are attracted by the odour of abuses, and regale on fancied imperfections. But do you suppose they like any thing else better than

* Lord Bacon, in speaking of the *Schoolmen.*

they do the Government? Are they on any better terms with their own families or friends? Do they not make the lives of every one they come near a torment to them, with their pedantic notions and captious egotism? Do they not quarrel with their neighbours, placard their opponents, supplant those on their own side of the question? Are they not equally at war with the rich and the poor? And having failed (for the present) in their project of *cashiering kings*, do they not give scope to their troublesome, overbearing humour, by taking upon them to *snub* and lecture the poor *gratis*? Do they not wish to extend "the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers," by putting a stop to population—to relieve distress by withholding charity, to remedy disease by shutting up hospitals? Is it not a part of their favourite scheme, their nostrum, their panacea, to prevent the miseries and casualties of human life by extinguishing it in the birth? Do they not exult in the thought (and revile others who do not agree to it) of plucking the crutch from the cripple, and tearing off the bandages from the agonized limb? Is it thus they would gain converts, or make an effectual stand against acknowledged abuses, by holding up a picture of the opposite side,

the most sordid, squalid, harsh, and repulsive, that narrow reasoning, a want of imagination, and a profusion of bile can make it? There is not enough of evil already in the world, but we must harden our feelings against the miseries that daily, hourly, present themselves to our notice, and set our faces against every thing that promises to afford any one the least gratification or pleasure. This is their *idea of a perfect commonwealth:* where each member performs his part in the machine, taking care of himself, and no more concerned about his neighbours, than the iron and wood-work, the pegs and nails in a spinning-jenny. Good screw! good wedge! good ten-penny nail! Are they really in earnest, or are they bribed, partly by their interests, partly by the unfortunate bias of their minds, to play the game into the adversary's hands? It looks like it; and the Government give them "good *œillades*"—Mr. Blackwood pats them on the back—Mr. Canning grants an interview and plays the amiable—Mr. Hobhouse keeps the peace. One of them has a place at the India-House: but then nothing is said against the India-House, though the poor and pious Old Lady sweats and almost swoons at the conversations which her walls are doomed to hear, but of which she is ashamed to com-

plain. One triumph of the *School* is to throw Old Ladies into hysterics*! The obvious (I should still hope not the intentional) effect of the Westminster tactics is to put every volunteer on the same side *hors de combat*, who is not a zealot of the strictest sect of those they call Political Economists; to come behind you with dastard, cold-blooded malice, and trip up the heels of those stragglers whom their friends and patrons in the Quarterly have *left still standing*; to strip the cause of Reform (out of seeming affection to it) of every thing like a *mis-alliance* with elegance, taste, decency, common sense, or polite literature, (as their fellow labourers in the same vineyard had previously endeavoured to do out of acknowledged hatred)—to disgust the friends of humanity, to cheer its enemies; and for the sake of indulging their unbridled dogmatism, envy and uncharitableness, to leave nothing intermediate between the Ultra-Toryism of the courtly scribes and their own Ultra-Radicalism

* This is not confined to the Westminster. A certain *Talking Potatoe*, (who is now one of the props of Church and State,) when he first came to this country, used to frighten some respectable old gentlewomen, who invited him to supper, by asking for a slice of the "leg of the Saviour," meaning a leg of Lamb; or a bit of "the Holy Ghost pie," meaning a pigeon-pie on the table. Ill-nature and impertinence are the same in all schools.

—between the extremes of practical wrong and impracticable right. Their, *our* antagonists will be very well satisfied with this division of the spoil:—give them the earth, and any one who chooses may take possession of the moon for them!

R. You allude to their attacks on the Edinburgh Review?

S. And to their articles on Scott's Novels, on Hospitals, on National Distress, on Moore's Life of Sheridan, and on every subject of taste, feeling, or common humanity. Sheridan, in particular, is termed "an unsuccessful adventurer." How gently this Jacobin jargon will fall on ears polite! This is what they call attacking principles and sparing persons: they spare the persons indeed of men in power (who have places to give away), and attack the characters of the dead or the unsuccessful with impunity! Sheridan's brilliant talents, his genius, his wit, his political firmness (which all but they admire) draw forth no passing tribute of admiration; his errors, his misfortunes, and his death (which all but they deplore) claim no pity. This indeed would be to understand the doctrine of Utility to very little purpose, if it did not at the first touch weed from the breast every amiable weakness and imperfect virtue

which had—never taken root there. But they make up for their utter want of sympathy with the excellences or failings of others by a proportionable self-sufficiency. Sheridan, Fox, and Burke were mere tyros and school-boys in politics compared to them, who are the "mighty land-marks of these latter times"—ignorant of those principles of "the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers," which *a few and recent writers* have promulgated. It is one way of raising a pure and lofty enthusiasm, as to the capacities of the human mind, to scorn all that has gone before us. Rather say, this dwelling with over-acted disgust on common frailties, and turning away with impatience from the brightest points of character, is "a discipline of humanity," which should be confined as much as possible to the Westminster School. Believe me, their theories and their mode of enforcing them stand in the way of reform: their philosophy is as little addressed to the head as to the heart—it is fit neither for man nor beast. It is not founded on any sympathy with the secret yearnings or higher tendencies of man's nature, but on a rankling antipathy to whatever is already best. Its object is to offend—its glory to find out and wound the tenderest part. What is not malice, is cowardice, and not candour.

They attack the weak and spare the strong, to indulge their officiousness and add to their self-importance. Nothing is said in the Westminster Review of the treatment of Mr. Buckingham by the East India Company: it might lessen the writer's *sphere of utility*, as Mr. Hall goes from Leicester to Bristol *to save more souls!* They do not grapple with the rich to wrest his superfluities from him (in this they might be foiled) but trample on the poor (a safe and pick-thank office) and wrench his pittance from him with their logical instruments and lying arguments. Let their system succeed, as they pretend it would, and diffuse comfort and happiness around; and they would immediately turn against it as effeminate, insipid, and sickly; for their tastes and understandings are too strongly braced to endure any but the most unpalatable truths and the bitterest ingredients. Their benefits are extracted by the Cæsarean operation. Their happiness, in short, is that—which will never be; just as their receipt for a popular article in a newspaper or review, is one that will never be read. *Their* articles are never read, and if they are not popular, no others ought to be so. The more any flimsy stuff is read and admired, and the more service it does to the sale of a journal, so much the more does it debauch the public taste, and render

it averse to their dry and solid lucubrations. This is why they complain of the patronage of my *Sentimentalities* as one of the sins of the Edinburgh Review; and why they themselves are determined to drench the town with the most unsavoury truths, without one drop of honey to sweeten the gall. Had they felt the least regard to the ultimate success of their principles—of "the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers," though giving pain might be one paramount and primary motive, they would have combined this object with something like the comfort and accommodation of their unenlightened readers.

R. I see no ground for this philippic, except in your own imagination.

S. Tell me, do they not abuse poetry, painting, music? Is it, think you, for the pain or the pleasure these things give? Or because they are without eyes, ears, imaginations? Is that an excellence in them, or the fault of these arts? Why do they treat Shakespear so cavalierly? Is there any one they would set up against him—any Sir Richard Blackmore they patronise; or do they prefer Racine, as Adam Smith did before them? Or what are we to understand?

R. I can answer for it, they do not wish to pull down Shakespear in order to set up Racine

on the ruins of his reputation. They think little indeed of Racine.

S. Or of Moliere either, I suppose?

R. Not much.

S. And yet these two contributed something to "the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers;" that is, to the amusement and delight of a whole nation for the last century and a half. But that goes for nothing in the system of Utility, which is satisfied with nothing short of the good of the whole. Such benefactors of the species, as Shakespear, Racine, and Moliere, who sympathised with human character and feeling in their finest and liveliest moods, can expect little favour from "those few and recent writers," who scorn the Muse, and whose philosophy is a dull antithesis to human nature. Unhappy they who lived before their time! Oh! age of Louis-XIV. and of Charles II., ignorant of the *Je ne sçais quoi* and of the *sçavoir vivre!* Oh! Paris built (till now) of mud! Athens, Rome, Susa, Babylon, Palmyra—barbarous structures of a barbarous period—hide your diminished heads! Ye fens and dykes of Holland, ye mines of Mexico, what are ye worth! Oh! bridges raised, palaces adorned, cities built, fields cultivated without skill or science, how came ye to exist till now! Oh! pictures, statues, temples, altars, hearths, the poet's verse, and so-

lemn-breathing airs, are ye not an insult on the great principles of "a few and recent writers?" How came ye to exist without their leave? Oh! Arkwright, unacquainted with spinning-jennies! Oh, Sir Robert Peel, unversed in calico-printing! Oh! generation of upstarts, what good could have happened before your time? What ill can happen after it?

R. But at least you must allow the importance of first principles?

S. Much as I respect a dealer in marine stores, in old rags and iron: both the goods and the principles are generally stolen. I see advertised in the papers—"Elements of Political Economy, by James Mill," and "Principles of Political Economy, by John Macculloch." Will you tell me in this case, whose are the First Principles? which is the true Simon Pure?

> "Strange! that such difference there should be
> 'Twixt *Tweedle-dum* and *Tweedle-dee!*"

R. You know we make it a rule to discountenance every attempt at wit, as much as the world in general abhor a punster.

S. By your using the phrase, "attempts at wit," it would seem that you admit there is a true and a false wit; then why do you confound the distinction? Is this logical, or even politic?

R. The difference is not worth attending to.

S. Still, I suppose, you have a great deal of this quality, if you chose to exert it?

R. I fancy not much.

S. And yet you take upon you to despise it! I have sometimes thought that the great professors of the modern philosophy were hardly sincere in the contempt they express for poetry, painting, music, and the Fine Arts in general—that they were private *amateurs* and prodigious proficients *under the rose*, and, like other lovers, hid their passion as a weakness—that Mr. M—— turned a barrel-organ—that Mr. P——— warbled delightfully—that Mr. Pl— had a manuscript tragedy by him, called "The Last Man," which he withheld from the public, not to compromise the dignity of philosophy by affording any one the smallest actual satisfaction during the term of his natural life.

R. Oh, no! you are quite mistaken in this supposition, if you are at all serious in it. So far from being proficients, or having wasted their time in these trifling pursuits, I believe not one of the persons you have named has the least taste or capacity for them, or any idea corresponding to them, except Mr. Bentham, who is fond of music, and says, with his usual *bonhommie* (which seems to increase with his age) that he does not see why others should not find

an agreeable recreation in poetry and painting*.

S. You are sure this cynical humour of theirs is not affectation, at least?

R. I am quite sure of it.

S. Then I am sure it is intolerable presumption in them to think their want of taste and knowledge qualifies them to judge (*ex cathedrâ*) of these Arts; or is a standard by which to measure the degree of interest which others do or ought to take in them. It is the height of impertinence, mixed up with a worse principle. As to the excesses or caprices of posthumous fame, like other commodities, it soon finds its level in the market. *Detur optimo* is a tolerably general rule. It is not of forced or factitious growth. People would not trouble their heads about Shakespear, if he had given them no pleasure, or cry him up to the skies, if he had not first raised them there. The world are not grateful *for nothing*. Shakespear, it is true, had

* One of them has printed a poem entitled "RHODOPE;" which, however, does not show the least taste or capacity for poetry, or any idea corresponding to it. *Bad poetry* serves to prove the existence of *good*. If all poetry were like Rhodope, the philosophic author might fulminate his anathemas against it (floods of ghastly, livid ire) as long as he pleased: but if this were poetry, there would be no occasion for so much anger: no one would read it or think any thing of it!

the misfortune to be born before our time, and is not one of "those few and recent writers," who monopolize all true greatness and wisdom (though not the reputation of it) to themselves. He need not, however, be treated with contumely on this account: the instance might be passed over as a solitary one. We shall have a thousand Political Economists, before we have another Shakespear.

R. Your mode of arriving at conclusions is very different, I confess, from the one to which I have been accustomed, and is too wild and desultory for me to follow it. Allow me to ask in my turn, Do you not admit Utility to be the test of morals, as Reason is the test of Utility?

S. Pray, what definition have you (in the School) of Reason and of Utility?

R. Nay, they require no definition; the meaning of both is obvious.

S. Indeed, it is easy to dogmatize without definitions, and to repeat broad assertions without understanding them. Nothing is so convenient as to begin with gravely assuming our own infallibility, and we can then utter nothing but oracles, of course.

R. What is it *you* understand by Reason?

S. It is your business to answer the question;

but still, if you choose, I will take the *onus* upon myself, and interpret for you.

R. I have no objection, if you do it fairly.

S. You shall yourself be judge. Reason, with most people, means their own opinion; and I do not find your friends a particular exception to the rule. Their dogmatical tone, their arrogance, their supercilious treatment of the pretensions of others, their vulgar conceit and satisfaction in their own peculiar tenets, so far from convincing me that they are right, convince me that they must be wrong (except by accident, or by mechanically parrotting others); for no one ever thought for himself, or looked attentively at truth and nature, that did not feel his own insufficiency and the difficulty and delicacy of his task. Self-knowledge is the first step to wisdom. The *Rational Dissenters* (who took this title as a characteristic distinction, and who professed an entire superiority over prejudice and superstition of all sorts,) were as little disposed to have their opinions called in question as any people I ever knew. One of their preachers thanked God publicly for having given them a *liberal religion.* So your School thank God in their hearts for having given them a *liberal philosophy*: though what with them passes for liberal is considered by the rest of the world as very much akin to illiberality.

R. May I beseech you to come to the point at once?

S. We shall be there soon enough, without hurrying. Reason, I conceive, in the sense that you would appeal to it, may signify any one of three things, all of them insufficient as tests and standards of moral sentiment, or (if that word displeases) of moral conduct:—1. Abstract truth, as distinct from local impressions or individual partialities; 2. Calm, inflexible self-will, as distinct from passion; 3. Dry matter of fact or reality, as distinct from sentimentality or poetry.

R. Let me hear your objections; but do for once adhere to the track you have chalked out.

S. "Thereafter as it happens." You may drag your grating go-cart of crude assumptions and heavy paralogisms along your narrow iron rail-way, if you please: but let me diverge down "primrose paths," or break my neck over precipices, as I think proper.

R. Take your own course. *A wilful man must have his way.* You demur, if I apprehend you right, to founding moral rectitude on the mere dictates of the Understanding. This I grant to be the grand *arcanum* of the doctrine of

Utility. I desire to know what other foundation for morals you will find so solid?

S. I know of none so flimsy. What! would you suspend all the natural and private affections on the mere logical deductions of the Understanding, and exenterate the former of all the force, tenderness, and constancy they derive from habit, local nearness or immediate sympathy, because the last are contrary to the speculative reason of the thing? I am afraid such a speculative morality will end in speculation, or in something worse. Am I to feel no more for a friend or a relative (say) than for an inhabitant of China or of the Moon, because, as a matter of argument, or setting aside their connection with me, and considered absolutely in themselves, the objects are, perhaps, of equal value? Or am I to screw myself up to feel as much for the Antipodes (or God knows who) as for my next-door neighbours, by such a forced intellectual scale? The last is impossible; and the result of the attempt will be to make the balance even by a diminution of our natural sensibility, instead of an universal and unlimited enlargement of our philosophic benevolence. The feelings cannot be made to keep pace with our bare knowledge of

existence or of truth; nor can the affections be disjoined from the impressions of time, place, and circumstance, without destroying their vital principle. Yet, without the sense of pleasure and pain, I do not see what becomes of the theory of Utility, which first reduces every thing to pleasure and pain, and then tramples upon and crushes these by its own sovereign will. The effect of this system is, like the touch of the torpedo, to chill and paralyse. We, notwithstanding, find persons acting upon it with exemplary coolness and self-complacency. One of these "subtilised savages" informs another who drops into his shop that news is come of the death of his eldest daughter, adding, as matter of boast—"I am the only person in the house who will eat any dinner to-day: *they do not understand the doctrine of Utility!*" I perceive this illustration is not quite to your taste.

R. Is it any thing more than the old doctrine of the Stoics?

S. I thought the system had been wholly new—the notable project of a "few and recent writers." I could furnish you with another parallel passage in the HYPOCRITE *

* "*Old Lady Lambert.* Come, come: I wish you would follow Dr. Cantwell's precepts, whose practice is conformable to what he teaches. Virtuous man!—above all sensual regards, he

R. Is it not as well, on any system, to suppress the indulgence of inordinate grief and violent passion, that is as useless to the dead as it is hurtful to the living?

S. If we could indulge our affections while they run on smoothly, and discard them from our breasts the instant they fail of their objects, it might be well. But the feelings, the habitual and rooted sentiments of the soul, are not the creatures of choice or of a *fanciful theory*. To take the utmost possible interest in an object, and be utterly and instantaneously indifferent to the loss of it, is not exactly in the order of human nature. We may blunt or extirpate our feelings altogether with proper study and pains, by ill-humour, conceit, and affectation, but not make them the playthings of a verbal paradox. I fancy if Mr. —— had lost a hundred pounds

considers the world merely as a collection of dirt and pebble-stones. How has he weaned me from temporal connexions! My heart is now set upon nothing sublunary; and, I thank Heaven, I am so insensible to every thing in this vile world, that I could see you, my son, my daughters, my brothers, my grandchildren, all expire before me, and mind it no more than the going out of so many snuffs of a candle.

"*Charlotte.* Upon my word, madam, it is a very humane disposition you have been able to arrive at, and your family is much obliged to the Doctor for his instructions."—Act II. Scene 1.

by a bad debt, or if a lump of soot had fallen into his broth, it would have spoiled his dinner. The doctrine of Utility would not have come to his aid here. It is reserved for great and trying occasions; or serves as an excuse for not affecting grief which its professors do not feel. So much for reason against passion.

R. But if they do not possess all the softness and endearing charities of private life, they have the firmness and unflinching hardihood of patriotism and devotion to the public cause.

S. That is what I have yet to learn. They are a kind of Ishmaelites, whose hand is *against* others—what or who they are for (except themselves) I do not know. They do not willingly come forward into the front nor even show themselves in the rear of the battle, but are very ready to denounce and disable those who are indiscreet enough to do so. They are not for precipitating a crisis, but for laying down certain general principles, which will do posterity a world of good and themselves no harm. They are a sort of *occult* reformers, and patriots *incognito*. They get snug places under Government, and mar popular Elections—but it is to advance the good of the cause. Their theories are as whole and as sleek as their skins, but that there is a certain jejuneness and poverty

in both which prevents their ever putting on a wholesome or comfortable appearance.

R. But at least you will not pretend to deny the distinction (you just now hinted at) between things of real Utility and merely fanciful interest?

S. No, I admit that distinction to the full. I only wish you and others not to mistake it.

R. I have not the slightest guess at what you mean.

S. Is there any possible view of the subject that has not been canvassed over and over again in the *School?* Or do you pass over all possible objections as the dreams of idle enthusiasts? Let me ask, have you not a current dislike to any thing in the shape of sentiment or *sentimentality?* for with you they are the same. Yet a thing and the *cant* about it are not the same. The cant about Utility does not destroy its essence. What do you mean by *sentimentality?*

R. I do not know.

S. Well: you complain, however, that things of the greatest use in reality are not always of the greatest importance in an imaginary and romantic point of view?

R. Certainly; this is the very pivot of all our well-grounded censure and dissatisfaction

with poetry, novel-writing, and other things of that flimsy, unmeaning stamp.

S. It appears, then, that there are two standards of value and modes of appreciation in human life, the one practical, the other ideal, —that that which is of the greatest moment to the Understanding is often of little or none at all to the Fancy, and *vice versa*. Why then force these two standards into one? Or make the Understanding judge of what belongs to the Fancy, any more than the Fancy judge of what belongs to the Understanding? Poetry would make bad mathematics, mathematics bad poetry: why jumble them together? Leave things, that are so, separate. *Cuique tribuito suum.*

R. I do not yet comprehend your precise drift.

S. Nay, then, you will not. It is granted that a certain thing, in itself highly useful, does not afford as much pleasure to the imagination, or excite as much interest as it ought to do, or as some other thing which is of less real and practical value. But why *ought* it to excite this degree of interest, if it is not its nature to do so? Why not set it down to its proper account of Utility in any philosophical estimate— let it go for what it is worth there, *valeat quan-*

tum valet—and let the other less worthy and (if you will) more meretricious object be left free to produce all the sentiment and emotion it is capable of, and which the former is inadequate to, and its value be estimated accordingly!

R. Will you favour me with an illustration—with any thing like common sense?

S. A table, a chair, a fire-shovel, a Dutch-stove are useful things, but they do not excite much sentiment—they are not confessedly the poetry of human life.

R. No.

S. Why then endeavour to make them so; or in other words, to make them more than they are or can become? A line, a sonnet, a picture, the sound of distant bells can and do excite an emotion, do appeal to the fancy and the heart (excuse this antiquated phraseology)—why then grudge them the pleasure they give to the human mind, and which it seems, on the very face of the argument, your objects of mere downright Utility (which are not also objects of Imagination) cannot? Why must I come to your shop, though you expressly tell me you have not the article I want? Or why swear, with Lord Peter in the Tale of a Tub, that your loaf of brown bread answers all the purposes of mutton? Why deprive life of what cheers and

adorns, more than of what supports it? A chair is good to sit in (as a matter of fact), a table to write on, a fire to warm one's self by.—No one disputes it; but at the same time I want something else to amuse and occupy my mind, something that stirs the breath of fancy, something that but to think of is to feel an interest in. Besides my automatic existence, I have another, a sentimental one, which must be nourished and supplied with proper food. This end the mere circumstance of practical or real Utility does not answer, and therefore is so far good for nothing.

R. But is it not to be feared that this preference should be carried to excess, and that the essential should be neglected for the frivolous?

S. I see no disposition in mankind to neglect the essential. Necessity has no choice. They pursue the mechanical mechanically, as puss places herself by the fireside, and snuffs up the warmth:—they dream over the romantic: and when their dreams are golden ones, it is pity to disturb them. There is as little danger as possible of excess here; for the interest in things merely *ideal* can be only in proportion to the pleasure, that is, the real benefit which attends them. A calculation of consequences may deceive, the impulses of passion may hurry us

away: sentiment alone is infallible, since it centres and reposes on itself. Like mercy, "its quality is not strained: it droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven upon the place beneath."—

R. You have asked me what Reason is: may I ask you what it is that constitutes Sentiment?

S. I have told you what Reason is: you should tell me what Sentiment is. Or I will give your learned professors and profound Encyclopedists, who lay down laws for the human mind without knowing any of the springs by which it acts, five years to make even a tolerable guess at what it is in objects that produces the fine flower of Sentiment, and what it is that leaves only the husk and stalk of Utility behind it.

R. They are much obliged to you, but I fancy their time is better employed.

S. What! in ringing the changes on the same cant-phrases, one after the other, in newspapers, reviews, lectures, octavo volumes, examinations, and pamphlets, and seeing no more of the matter all the while than a blind horse in a mill?

R. I have already protested against this personality. But surely you would not put fiction on a par with reality?

S. My good friend, let me give you an instance of my way of thinking on this point. I

met Dignum (the singer) in the street the other day: he was humming a tune; and his eye, though quenched, was smiling. I could scarcely forbear going up to speak to him. Why so? I had seen him in the year 1792 (the first time I ever was at a play), with Suett and Miss Romanzini and some others, in No Song No Supper; and ever since, that bright vision of my childhood has played round my fancy with unabated, vivid delight. Yet the whole was fictitious, your cynic philosophers will say. I wish there were but a few realities that lasted so long, and were followed with so little disappointment. The *imaginary* is what we conceive to be: it is reality that tantalizes us and turns out a fiction—that is the false Florimel!

R. But the Political Economists, in directing the attention to "the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers," wish to provide for the solid comforts and amelioration of human life.

S. Yes, in a very notable way, after their fashion. I should not expect from men who are jealous of the mention of any thing like enjoyment, any great anxiety about its solid comforts. Theirs is a very comfortable theory indeed! They would starve the poor outright, reduce their wages to what is barely necessary to keep them alive, and if they cannot work, re-

fuse them a morsel for charity. If you hint at any other remedy but "the grinding law of necessity" suspended *in terrorem* over the poor, they are in agonies and think their victims are escaping them: if you talk of the pressure of Debt and Taxes, they regard you as a very common-place person indeed, and say they can show you cases in the reign of Edward III. where, without any reference to Debt or Taxes, the price of labour was tripled—after a plague! So full is their imagination of this desolating doctrine, that sees no hope of good but in cutting off the species, that they fly to a pestilence as a resource against all our difficulties—if we had but a pestilence, it would demonstrate all their theories!

R. Leave Political Economy to those who profess it, and come back to your invented metaphysics. Do you not place actual sensations before sentimental refinements, and think the former the first things to be attended to in a sound moral system?

S. I place the heart in the centre of my moral system, and the senses and the understanding are its two extremities. You leave nothing but gross, material objects as the ends of pursuit, and the dry, formal calculations of the understanding as the means of ensuring them. Is

this enough? Is man a mere animal, or a mere machine for philosophical experiments? All that is intermediate between these two is sentiment. I do not wonder you sometimes feel a *vacuum*, which you endeavour to fill up with spleen and misanthropy. Can you divest the mind of habit, memory, imagination, foresight, will? Can you make it go on physical sensations, or on abstract reason alone? Not without making it over again. As it is constituted, reflection recals what sense has once embodied; imagination weaves a thousand associations round it, time endears, regret, hope, fear, innumerable shapes of uncertain good still hover near it. I hear the sound of village bells—it "opens all the cells where memory slept"—I see a well-known prospect, my eyes are dim with manifold recollections. What say you? Am I only as a rational being to hear the sound, to see the object with my bodily sense? Is all the rest to be dissolved as an empty delusion, by the potent spell of unsparing philosophy? Or rather, have not a thousand real feelings and incidents hung upon these impressions, of which such dim traces and doubtful suggestions are all that is left? And is it not better that truth and nature should speak this imperfect but heartfelt language, than be entirely dumb? And should

we not preserve and cherish this precious link that connects together the finer essence of our past and future being by some expressive symbol, rather than suffer all that cheers and sustains life to fall into the dregs of material sensations and blindfold ignorance? There, now, is half a definition of Sentiment: for the other half we must wait till we see the article in the Scotch Encyclopedia on the subject. To deprive man of sentiment, is to deprive him of all that is interesting to himself or others, except the present object and a routine of cant-phrases, and to turn him into a savage, an automaton, or a Political Economist. Nay more, if we are to feel or do nothing for which we cannot assign a precise reason, why we cannot so much as walk, speak, hear, or see, without the same unconscious, implicit faith—not a word, not a sentence but hangs together by a number of imperceptible links, and is a bundle of prejudices and abstractions.

R. I can make nothing of you or your arguments.

S. All I would say is, that you cannot take the measure of human nature with a pair of compasses or a slip of parchment: nor do I think it an auspicious opening to the new *Political Millennium* to begin with setting our faces

against all that has hitherto kindled the enthusiasm, or shutting the door against all that may in future give pleasure to the world. Your Elysium resembles Dante's *Inferno*—"Who enters there must leave all hope behind!"

R. The poets have spoiled you for all rational and sober views of men and society.

S. I had rather be wrong with them, than right with some other persons that I could mention. I do not think you have shewn much tact or consecutiveness of reasoning in your defence of the system: but you have only to transcribe the trite arguments on the subject, set your own and a bookseller's name to them, and pass off for the head of a school and one of the great lights of the age!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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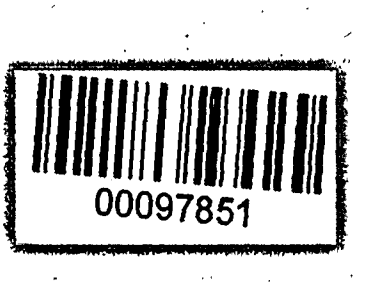

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